the PARIS REVIEW

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JOYCE CARY
an interview

Mac Hyman

Adrienne Cecile Rich

Pati Hill

drawings by PICASSO

Mary Lee Settle

Dino Buzzati

Short Stories

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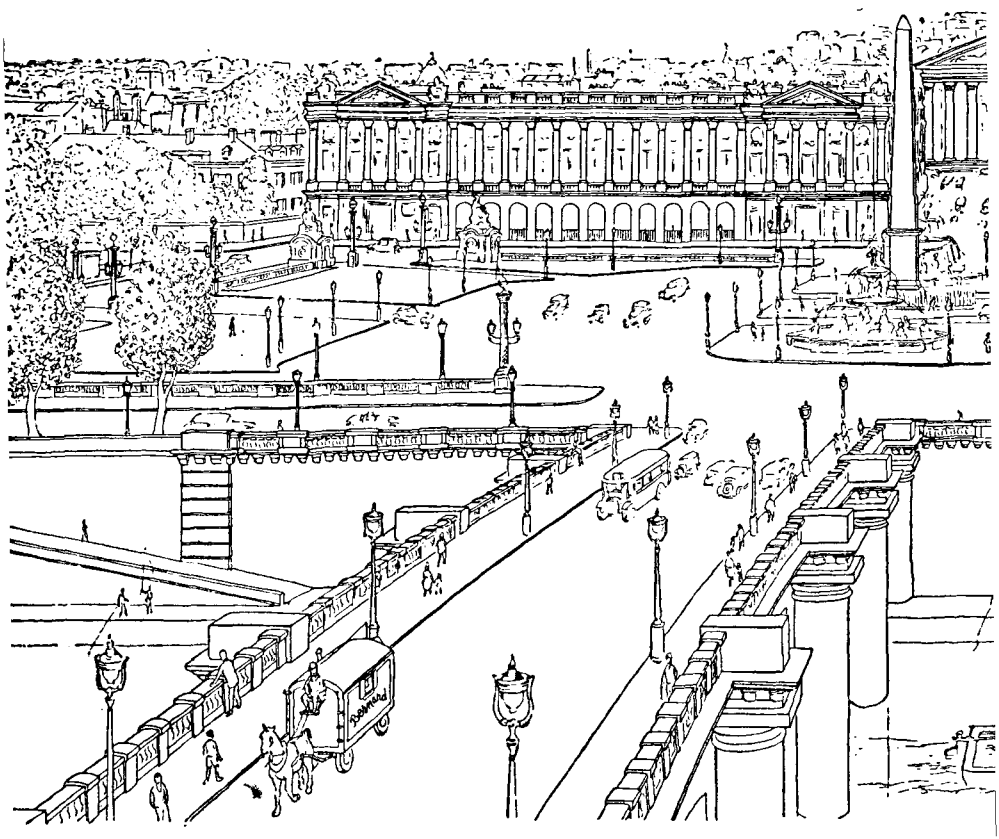

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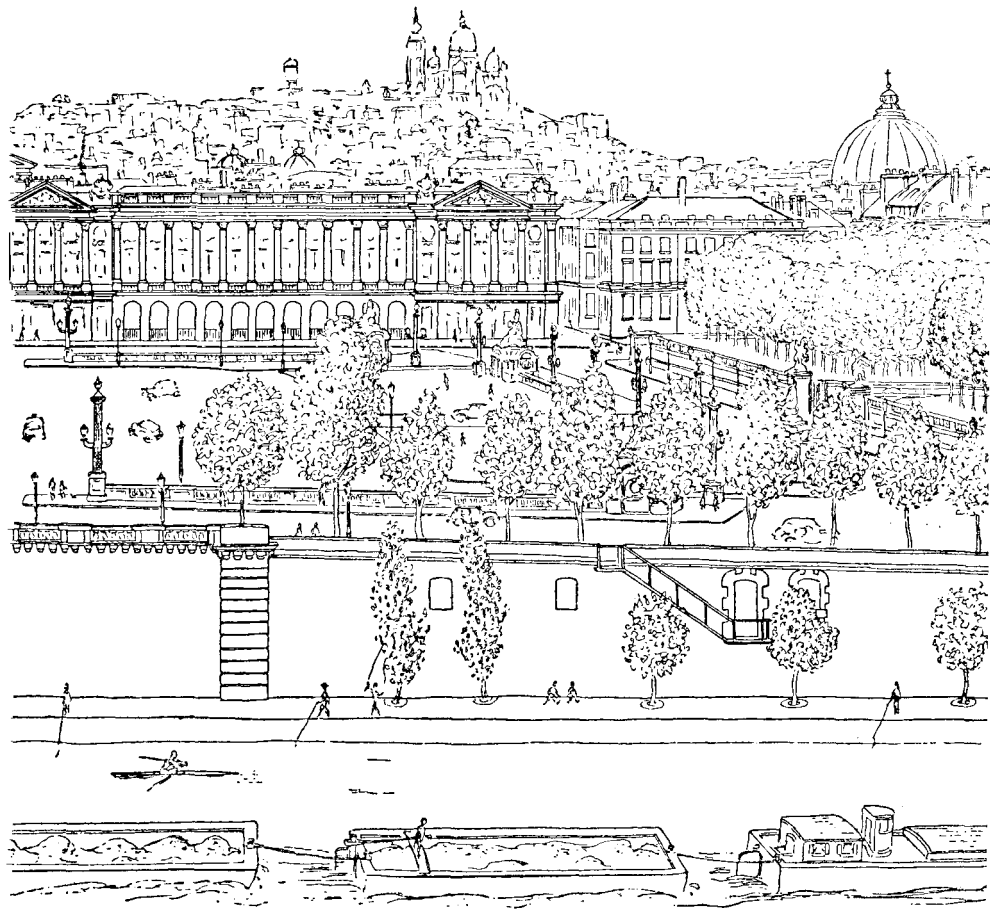

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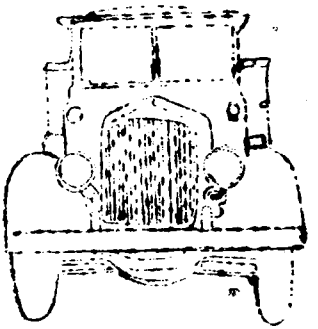
MAC HYMAN



THE HUNDREDTH CENTENNIAL

THEY piled into the truck and started on the thirteen miles over the hard rutted dirt roads to the highway. The high sideboards with the straw still in between the cracks banged wildly from side to side, jerking back and forth the two girls who sat on the boxes at the end of the truck, holding to the sides with one hand and onto the skirts of their prim pink satin dresses with the other. They finally reached the highway and stopped, the steam hissing up in the top of the radiator; they waited, resting, while the clean shaven man behind the wheel craned his neck this way and that inside the clean starched collar, then shifted into first, jolted up over the hump in the highway and made the long laborious turn toward town, the tin on the hood rattling ominously, the sideboards beginning to sway rythmically again.

The occupants in the back of the truck began shifting their weights for the new sensation over the paved roads. The two girls in their pink dresses, looking almost like twins, straightened themselves and their skirts, and Polly Ann, the youngest of the two, reached back and put her hand on the top of the head of the six-year-old Maddie Claude to keep her from bouncing, giving the child a hunched squat look but not helping much otherwise as the truck still jolted and her legs still bounced up and down, the heels of her shoes clicking sharply on the bottom. Seth stood at the front of the truck his straw Panama hat sitting cockwise on his head, not holding on or balancing himself but chewing nonchalantly on a match stick, his legs in the pinstripe pants weaving back and forth

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almost imperceptibly, his body motionless, like a bird on a limb in a high wind. Jonny stood beside him, a small edition of himself coming up to about his shoulders, watching Seth and trying himself not to hold on but finally letting one hand steal out to the wabbling sideboards and the other to the brim of his own straw hat. The hat was too big for him; it came down over his hair and formed a line running just above the eyebrows and the top of his ears so that he seemed to be staring at you out of a deep hole, and no matter how much he tightened the muscles in his forehead, the wind kept catching under the brim so that he finally had no other choice than to reach up and shamefully hold onto it.

They headed on down the highway, the truck settling down to a steady rattle and hissing, the dirt in the bottom bouncing slightly from the small jolts in the road. Tom Hamilton gripped onto the vibrating wheel, wrapping his big knuckled fingers all the way around it, his lean gaunt face staring ahead statuesquely like an unbearded Abraham Lincoln; only the lower portion of his faced moved chewing on his tobacco. He held intently to the wheel as if trying to prove to himself that he actually had control over the truck when it was moving while his wife Mamie sat huddled up next to him, her manly hands with the blunt nails resting on the baby's stomach. Her round, boneless looking face stared blankly ahead as if she were already in town pricing the food at the store. She sat silently leaving a large gap between herself and the short squat man at her side, Albert, her husband's brother, who always smelled of tobacco and whiskey and breathed in a wheezing sound and looked far more like her than he did his own brother; he sat there now wheezing and humming to himself and looking around at the fields and at the road and at the front of the truck, his small blue eyes darting from side to side. They joggled along the road and rose up slightly with the rolls in the pavement, the three of them and the baby all lifting up suddenly with the same expressions on their faces, holding the same positions, rising up into the air and down again as if they had never moved, the way a juggler can throw balls in the air and have them

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suspended in the same formation—they hit, rose up, came down, bounced a few more times never moving, staring straight ahead.

They had just strained up one hill and started down it, seeing Callville in the distance, when the Model A came into sight. It was about a half a mile ahead of them at the time and they could see the black heads inside of it, its high top, the right rear wheel wabbling frantically on a loose axle. They gained on it, the truck coming down the hill and getting some speed behind it. Tom Hamilton let his foot down slowly, giving the motor a different sound but with no immediate change in speed; his brogan shoe mashed it to the floorboard and his jaw moved faster, slowed up, moved faster again; his wife held the baby up and juggled her and Albert twisted in his seat, his eye on the wabbling wheel, and quit humming for a few seconds. They gained slowly, the Model A looking motionless in front of them as if it were sitting there and shaking all over like a wet dog. Seth moved his mouth, flipping the match stick over to the other side of his lips so that somehow his hat seemed to be cocked even more than before; Jonny began chewing on a straw as if it were gum, holding on to the sideboards with both hands now. Tom Hamilton pressed his foot hard against the excelerator; he then twisted the wheel with great deliberation, moving his shoulders as if it were a manly struggle, and held it there waiting for the truck to respond. Finally it jerked over and headed for the center line, the steering wheel bumping and knocking now. He turned it back and leveled out on the left hand side of the road, pulling out some fifty feet behind the Model A, settling down for the long trip around it.

None of them looked at it as they gained but Albert who leaned over staring at the wabbling wheel; they looked all around it but not at it. They came within twenty feet and then ten and then almost upon it, and then Tom Hamilton let go the wheel with his right hand and reached forward touching the horn wire that dangled out below the dash to the charge, letting out a blare from the horn that could be heard even above the noises of the truck; then he put both

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hands back on the wheel again, his jaw moving rapidly. All of them kept their eyes on a point far down the road as if the car did not exist; they saw it as they went by only out of the corners of their eyes, seeing the closely huddled seven or eight negroes' white eyeballs as the Model A pulled far over to the right. They passed it and got in front with Seth and Jonny staring straight ahead, and Polly Ann and Margaret peering intently over the top of it at something way off in the distance as it came into view behind them.

They came into Callville a few minutes later. They came over the railroad crossing on the south of town where the truck rumbled from side to side, the large sideboards banging and flapping powerfully like the wings of a huge bird. The girls and their boxes bounced around and the small girl on the floor went up and down and sideways while Polly Ann kept her hand pressed down on the top of her head; Seth's legs joggled up and down like two piston rods while his body remained motionless and Jonny's hat jumped from side to side; the three of them in the front seat moved together as if they were jointed, left and right, then rose up and came down again. The truck hissed to a stop; Tom Hamilton shoved it in first again to get it on across the railroad.

They made it on up the small incline that led into the middle of town and past the confederate monument where the soldier on top stood poised with his rifle ready to charge North at the given signal—they were just passing around the monument when they began to notice the decorations and the difference in the uptown section. They saw strung between lamp posts entwining ribbons of red and white, going from post to post and across the streets; they saw drapes over the doors, signs in windows, red and white placards, Confederate and American flags in front of the stores and a big streamer across the street in front of the stoplight saying: "Hundredth Centennial."

They looked around the streets as they went through. The streamers went down the street toward the railroad, on the stores on either side, and up the other street. Seth took the match stem out of his mouth and looked from side to side just

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by shifting his eyes; Jonny moved up next to him, turning his head around looking at all the decorations. "Hey, what is it?" he asked.

Seth put the match back in his mouth, clamped his teeth on it and nodded at the sign by the stoplight.

"What?" Jonny asked.

He nodded at the sign, "The hundredth centnal."

'Yeah? What's that?"

Seth flicked his eyes at him then away. He finally cleared his throat and turned his back, picking at his teeth with the match stem. Jonny looked up and down the street, then stepped back to where Polly Ann and Margaret sat and pointed to the sign. "The hundredth centnal," he said. "It looks like they done decorated up for my birthday, dont it?"

Polly Ann looked at him and said, "Huh!"

"Well, hits the same day, aint it? Today's my birthday, aint it? I'm sixteen today and they done decorated for it!"

"What's the hundredth centnal?" Margaret asked.

Nobody answered; they looked up and down the street as the truck turned at the corner, and Jonny went back to the front where Seth was and said, "The hundredth centnal is on the same day as my birthday."

"Yeah," Seth said.

"The very same day."

"Yeah."

They parked on Smoky Road in a lot in front of the feedstore where there were no parking meters, across the street from the red, corrugated roof depot. They got out and stretched and patted their clothes right and brushed the dust off the smaller girl who stood staring at the train just coming in across the street, watching while the steam hissed and the black smoke puffed up in great explosive bursts; they fussed over her while Albert went over to the feedstore and began talking with an old man in overalls, soon arguing loudly: Tom Hamilton carefully rolled a cigarette out of the little white sack as Mamie talked at him, going over the list of groceries she had to get; he listened while he packed the cigarette with his blunt fingers and licked it moistly and put it

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in his mouth and lit it, the paper on the end flaming up and burning down half an inch before it reached the tobacco. He heard her out and then fumbled in his back pocket for the little greasy purse which he clicked open and counted out for her six rolled up dollar bills and a fifty cent piece while the others slowly gathered around and watched so that he finally pulled out three quarters and handed one each to Jonny, Margaret, and Polly Ann, hesitated a moment and then pulled a dime from somewhere in the bottom of it for the six-year-old Maddie Claude, then snapped it shut quickly, glancing uneasily at Seth who stood apart from the little group staring at something down the street as if he were intent on watching it.

They stood around the truck after that only so long as propriety demanded, then drifted off in different directions, Seth first, strolling off slowly, then moving faster with his steel taps clicking sharply on the pavement. Jonny hesitated; he looked first at his mother and then turned to Polly Ann who was also looking at him as if she were ready to say something. He said quickly, "I think I'll go with Seth today." They stared at each other for a second and she said, "You're not going to go with us down to...?" but let it trail off as she looked away from him, and he turned his head too so that neither of them was looking at the other anymore; he then turned suddenly and started after Seth, twisting his head this way and that at the ribbons and the drapes over the doorways.

And in a few minutes, Polly Ann and Margaret left too, walking fast through the crowd, huddled over talking excitedly as if over some deep secret; and then Mamie, holding Maddie Claude by the right hand and holding the baby with the other, while Tom Hamilton went over and sat down on the steps of the feedstore and listened to Albert and old man Biggers argue; he sat there a minute or two and got up and left, going down Smoky Road to where some men sat on a bench in front of a hardware store—they moved over and made room for him.

It was about ten o'clock when they all parted at the truck;

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they would not meet again there until late that night. Seth, with Jonny following along, headed up past the ten cent store and the picture show to the pool room where he sat at one of the chairs on the side watching two men shoot snooker on the front table; Jonny sat next to him, blinking his eyes trying to get used to the cool remote darkness after the bright April sunlight outside. The pool room was not crowded yet; the tables in the back were racked up with the lights off. Seth lounged in the chair watching the game; he crossed his legs and lit a cigarette as Jonny watched him out of the corner of his eye. Jonny blinked his eyes again, glanced at Seth and then lounged down in his seat too and crossed his legs, watching the smoke rising up under the buzzing blue neon lights that came down across the table, the roof of his mouth drawing up in distaste as he watched the fat man with the white shirt take a cigar out of his mouth, the ends of it wet and limp, and turn up a mug of beer he had on the counter. He eyed Seth a few more times and finally leaned over and said casually and rather harshly, "Give me a cigarette, will you, Seth?"

Seth didn't answer him at first; he was dragging on his own, his eyes squenched up. Jonny turned back to watch the game again but could feel Seth shifting his eyes at him. He jumped slightly when he heard Seth say, "Give you what?" He couldn't think of anything to say.

"What?" he said.

"Give you a cigarette?"

"Yeah, come on, Seth. I want to try one."

Seth didn't say anything for a moment and he held his breath. Then Seth finally reached down into his pocket and pulled out the pack; Jonny, his eyes still toward the table, took one out and put it between his lips, holding it right in the center of his lips with them puckered out, and handed the pack back.

He took another deep breath and said, "How about a match?" and waited while Seth slowly fished it out and handed it to him. Jonny lit the cigarette and blew the smoke out without inhaling. He held it between his front two fingers

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both fingers stiff, dragging on it and blowing the smoke out in great gushes, his eyes watering and stinging, staring at the red balls on the table.

Polly Ann and Margaret were at the bus station. They sat at the white counter and ordered Cokes from the fat girl in the white dress. They sipped at them, huddled over together while Polly Ann kept glancing at herself in the mirror just behind the counter. They darted their eyes this way and that at the people coming in, the country people in their clean khakis and blue jeans and overalls; they turned around to watch the bus unload, giggling together at the large colored woman with all the bundles who almost tripped off. They watched, turned and whispered to each other as Polly Ann, glancing at the mirror, pulled her shoulders back making her breasts rise a little and point more under the pink satin front, glancing at times at the fat girl and back at herself again. She then turned to Margaret who was talking to her and lowered her eyes several times, noticing the lines she was forming; she would look at her year older sister, then back at herself again—then, seemingly satisfied, at whatever or whomever Margaret was talking about at the time. They turned their eyes from the door and concentrated on something on the counter as two boys about their own ages whom they knew came in; neither of them looked up, giving the boys a chance to speak to them without their seeming willing; they huddled and concentrated until the two boys went out the door again without speaking, and then they looked up at the same time without any kind of conscious signal and watched the people indifferently, a little irritated with each other somehow. Polly Ann turned all the way around on the stool and watched the two boys going across the street. She said, "There goes Tim and that other boy. They're the stuck-uppidest things."

"Where?"

"Over yonder, " Polly Ann said.

"Oh, is that them? That aint them, is it?"

"I think so," Polly Ann said.

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"Well, I'm glad they didn't see us," Margaret said. "They are the stuck-uppidest things..."

They were just finishing up their Cokes and ready to leave when the north bound bus came in. They each began sipping more slowly waiting to see who would get off, discussing what they were going to get Jonny for his birthday, trying to decide between the green top that Margaret wanted to buy and the cigarette lighter that Polly Ann insisted on. "What would he want with that?" Margaret said. "He dont even smoke."

"Well, he might someday. He's sixteen now, aint he?"

"Well," Margaret said, "I just dont see the sense in it when he dont even smoke, and we dont have the money for it nohow."

They argued the point, not looking at each other but at the bus outside the door, watching the blond headed woman who was getting off, seeing the long, red-colored fingernails and rings as she reached out taking the driver's helping hand. They talked and watched her as she walked primly on the very high heels, clicking toward the door of the station, the muscles in her hips moving like a well-oiled machine under the tight fitting skirt. She came in, her eyes looking a little blank, her blond hair seeming somehow wrong against her complexion. Polly Ann dug at a piece of ice in the bottom of her glass, turning her back as the woman sat down at the counter a seat away from her and said to the waitress who was also watching her, "Bring me a Coke, will you, honey, and put a little bit of lemon in it."

She clicked her purse open, got out a handkerchief and leaned over to look in the mirror, straightening her lipstick; then took out a cigarette and lit it. Polly Ann watched the fat girl contemptously as she suddenly became bashful and confused when the woman asked her what all the decorations around town were for.

"They're going to have the hundredth centnal, or something like that," the fat girl said, blushing.

"What is it, honey, some kind of fair?"

"Well, something like that, I guess."

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A man sitting on the other side of her, a grey headed man with a grey suit who had been watching her, said, "I dont think nobody knows what it is, but they are going to celebrate it all right." The woman turned and looked at him and the man laughed, his voice unnatural, his laugh strained, his face turning a little red; Polly Ann could see his finger moving nervously over the sandwich he was eating. From the color of his face she could tell that he was from the country, despite the grey suit he was wearing.

"Where you from?" he asked, the smile becoming a little frozen on his face, twisting slightly on the seat.

"Jacksonville," she said, not even looking at him now.

"Where you headed?"

For a moment it seemed as if she wasn't even going to answer him. Then she said shortly, "The other direction." Some people snickered and the man turned redder in the face, looking confused and nervous, then turned back and took a large bite out of his sandwich. In a minute he left, leaving the sandwich half-eaten, going sheepishly out of the station.

They waited until she had finished her Coke and watched her walk over to the ticket window and ask about what time the other buses were going out; they got up then to leave, Margaret going for the door and Polly Ann stopping and suddenly boldly staring at the woman, up and down, as she went past. Then she followed Margaret to the door and out and on down the street, holding her shoulders back with her breasts pushing out, her hips moving slightly. "Wasnt that man disgusting, though," she said. "I'll bet he was sixty years old."

"Ugh," Margaret said. "Did you see how her hair looked?"

"She had it blondeened, I bet," Polly Ann said. "I think I'll have mine done like that."

"Oh, my goodness," Margaret said, looking at her.

"Well, she aint no bigger than I am without those high heels, is she?" Polly Ann said suddenly. But then she laughed and Margaret did too, and it suddenly seemed very funny to both of them so that they put their arms in between each other's, huddling together down the street, giggling myster-

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iously every time they looked at each other until they reached the corner where Polly Ann stopped giggling except when Margaret started it up again. They looked in the reflections of the windows, Margaret studying the displays, Polly Ann touching at the back of her hair as she glanced at herself.

The town gradually became more crowded as the people came in. They parked their pick-up and two-ton trucks on the street by the railroad; old cars stopped and people climbed out like midgets at a circus; there were wagons and mules and cut down Model T's, and by noon the streets were filled with negroes and whites in overalls and khakis, women with children and bundles, men standing around in little groups on the corners talking about crops and the weather and prices and all the decorations around town. Jonny, still in the pool room, ate a hot dog for dinner sitting in the chair next to the table where Seth leaned over shooting, the cigarette smoke curling up around his eyes, holding his cue with grace and ease, chalking the end of it after each shot. Jonny watched proudly as Seth ran up thirty-three points at one time, and then he finished up his hot dog and licked the mustard off his fingers and got in a game of eight-ball with the boy who racked the balls up. He sank only two balls but learned to powder and chalk the cue without all the awkwardness that he had noted somewhat contemptously in the other beginners.

Albert ate dinner by himself at a little restaurant near the railway station and kidded the waitress who giggled at him; he drank three beers and left with a man to go to the ball park where they were going to have some ceremonies and speeches. He rode out with the man and was disappointed in the fact that no more than thirty people were there, and the speakers on the platforms became self-conscious and ended up by kidding each other over the loud speakers, making private jokes so that nobody else laughed much. Albert finally got tired of it and walked back to town and back to the restaurant to drink some more beer and talk with the waitress some more; he was just starting on his second one when the woman came in.

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She came in behind him so that he could not see her at first, but from the perfume he almost knew what she was like without looking. He sucked in his breath sharply, his nostrils contracting, and turned to see her short, well-formed, small body and the blond hair and the red fingernails as she slid herself onto the stool right down from him, the sharp line of the indentation of her bloomers making a little ridge in the silkish dress just below her buttocks. He breathed shortly for a few moments, shifting his eyes at her. He grinned broadly suddenly and moved down next to her, saying, "You're a stranger here, I bet. What's the chances of buying a stranger a good cold brew." He held a good-natured smile on his face, his eyes twinkling, as she looked him over. He stood there grinning; she stared at him coldly then angrily, then contemptuously, and finally, when he did not wilt, cordially, and said, "Well, I might at that, being as you offered."

"Sho," Albert said. "Besides, we're having our hundredth centnal today. And besides that my nephew's having a birthday—going to have to do something for that boy. Good boy, sixteen today."

"Well, I'll have one to your nephew then," she said smiling. "I remember when I was sixteen."

"Well, sir, I wish to God I could," Albert said. "Honey, bring the lady here a good cool brew..."

At about four o'clock that afternoon, the man from the radio station came uptown. He parked his truck with the man inside who controlled the output down near the picture show, then got out and started stringing out the wires leading from it, testing it for the program that was supposed to begin at four-thirty. He worked busily getting everything set up, moving among the silently forming bunch of staring faces with an apologetic smile frozen on his face. He begged pardons and excused himself, smiling from one to the other, the short bow tie bobbing up and down on his Adam's apple as he tested saying, "One, two, three, four... Do you hear it, Charlie?"

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The people formed a little half circle around the busy man in the middle, staring at him. Old man Biggers stood watching, chewing violently on a wad of tobacco, asking every once in awhile, "What's that fer, there?" Tom Hamilton came up from the bench where he was sitting and stood next to him and they watched the goings-on. In a little while Mamie came out of the grocery store holding the baby and the groceries in her arms with Maddie Claude tagging along; she came and watched a minute, then took the groceries back to the truck before coming to see the movie that she always went to on Saturday. She came back just as the man was beginning the program, standing by her husband and blankly watching the tangle of wires around the truck. "I wonder where Jonny went off to," she said. "I thought I'd take him to the show being as it's his birthday and all, you know."

"He's off with Seth somewheres," Tom Hamilton said not looking at her.

"And usually he's deviling me to death to go," she said.

Tom Hamilton nodded his head, not answering her but watching the man in the middle. Mamie looked around vaguely for Jonny, finally said again, "Well, I wonder where they went?"

Tom Hamilton looked at her; he leaned over and spat and wiped his mouth off on the sleeve of his shirt. "Well, there aint no sense in waiting around here on him," he said. "Maybe he dont want to go nohow."

After that, he didn't say anything else to her. He got interested in the announcer's answer when he began clicking the microphone and Mr. Biggers asked, "What's that fer, there?" Mamie finally turned and headed for the box office and paid her money, looking back over her shoulder for Jonny before disappearing into the darkness where already the horses thundered and the shots were ringing out.

At four-thirty, just as Mamie went into the movie, the announcer got a nod from the man in the truck. His face became suddenly animated with a wide grin; his voice rang out loudly and enthusiastically, his little bow tie jumping up and down on his throat. He talked, nodded, smiled and

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bobbed around, waving his arms exclaiming on the crowd that had gathered on this, the Hundredth Centennial of Callville. He described the decorations and the crowds and told about the street dance they were going to have that night with Roy Bolton and his boys playing right here in the middle of town. Then he began his interviewing, looking around mischievously, and tried to get a large woman with a bundle of groceries in her arms to say just a few words, only she tightened her lips and moved back and started on up the street, as he described her departure with a great many forced chuckles in his voice.

Seth and Jonny came out of the pool room and stood around the edge of the group, Seth's head coming up above the others, Jonny secretly standing on his toes. Tom Hamilton took out the little sack and began to roll a cigarette and Mr. Biggers stared at the tangle of wires around the truck, his jaw moving rapidly. The announcer had cornered a lanky boy who looked at him stupidly, grinning, shaking his head from side to side. The announcer said, "Won't you just tell us your name?" The boy smiled broadly at the announcer, showing an ungodly amount of teeth. "Just your name. Won't you just tell us your *name*?" He was leaned over holding the microphone in front of the boys lips and the boy still looked at him grinning, both of them staring at each other as the boy's lips started to move and stopped, as the announcer leaned over bobbing his head up and down like a mother with a daughter who had forgotten her nursery rhyme, trying to force the words out of the grinning face. Then he jerked back the microphone and began talking into it, his face assuming a hideous smile that barely exposed his teeth. "Well," he said, "that young man didn't seem to care to talk over the radio. But there are lots of other folks around today. Yessir, you folks at home by your radios... You, sir, how about telling us your name..." This to a tall, hard-looking man in overalls. "Won't you even tell us your name?... Well, maybe this gentleman... ha! ha! ha!... Well, I guess he was in pretty much of a hurry; he just kept right on going. Yessir, you folks at home..."

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The crowd watched him impassively as he went on like this for some fifteen minutes without getting anybody to say a word, his laugh by this time becoming a forced gurgle that he seemed to push up out of his stomach, his face knotted into a smile so tightly that sometimes his lips would begin jerking involuntarily. They stood and watched as he cornered one man who for some reason kept grunting at him, and one other who didn't say anything but did at least start to, only to get strangled at the time and begin coughing and keep coughing until the announcer had to pull back the microphone to say a few words himself to keep the program *going*; he waited, moving from one foot to the other while the man gasped and strangled and hacked, holding the microphone over when he thought he had stopped, then having to jerk it back again, saying once or twice, "Well, he really did get strangled, didn't he?" He waited another minute while the man heaved and choked, said again, "Well, he really did get strangled, didn't he?" and tried to laugh again. He managed to wait this one out hopefully though until the man finally stopped, then held the microphone over to his lips only to get the sounds of the man hacking, clearing his throat, spitting, and then blowing his nose loudly, after which he went on down the street like the others.

Albert and the woman whose name he had learned was Clarene came out of the restaurant and saw the crowd and started for it, Albert walking bouncily, smiling and talking and pointing to things along the way as she walked beside him in her short steps, the heels of her shoes clicking loudly and the muscles in her body moving rythmically. They stopped and stood on the edge of the crowd, smelling like a mixture of perfume and beer, as the people moved back slightly to look at them. She looked vaguely at the truck and the announcer and said brightly, "Oh, they're having a radio progum," slurring over her words and ending them with a slight hiccup, after which she raised one hand to her mouth daintily.

The announcer was trying to use up the rest of his time now, seriously describing with dead-pan face the different

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decorations around the stores, and trying to get eloquent once or twice, saying, "It's too bad that some of our fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers are not here today to witness this tribute to the hundredth anniversary of our town. Yes, we miss them and wish they were here, but we know that they are out yonder somewhere watching us today—and we wish you folks at home listening in were here too..."

They stood listening, Albert looking around smiling from one to the other, his hand straight down by his side so that when Clarene moved it brushed up against the silky smoothness of her bottom. Clarence listened to the announcer's eloquence and reached in her purse and got out a handkerchief and dabbed at her eyes which were beginning to smart, mumbling, "Yes, there are off somewheres, seeing us. I remember when I was sixteen."

Seth saw her over the crowd of heads and his eyes stopped suddenly and he clamped his teeth down on the match, staring at her, then turned to Flip who had come out of the pool room with them and who had just seen her too, and they nodded their heads at each other. Flip shook his head sideways unbelievingly and a light hissing came out of his teeth.

"Aint that your uncle with her?"

Seth nodded, staring at them. "Je-sus!"

"Man," Flip said. "Lordy, lawd!"

"Je-sus!" Seth hissed.

"What is it?" Jonny asked standing on his toes. "What is it?"

The crowd was just breaking up when Polly Ann and Margaret came out of the ten cent store. The announcer had wound up the broadcast five minutes before time actually so that they had to fill in the rest of it with music; he was now helping to load up the truck, moving listlessly, his eyes rather blank, taking deep heaving breaths every once in awhile as some of the crowd still stood there and watched him silently, jaws moving up and down on wads of tobacco and chewing gum. Polly Ann and Margaret saw the crowd and wondered about it but neither of them mentioned it as they were

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arguing at the time; neither one looked at the other. "You go on and get what you want," Polly Ann said. "But I aint going to put nothing in it. He dont care nothing about a green top no more."

"Well, he sho dont care anything about a cigarette lighter."

"Well, that's what I'm going to get. I dont care what you say. He's sixteen now and dont want no green top."

"Do you know how much those things cost. I think you are losing your mind or something. The cheapest one you found yet was that one at the drugstore and that cost a dollar and a half! And you got fifty cents and I got thirty... I dont see how you expect to get it and I dont see what he would want with one anyhow. Honest to goodness Polly Ann sometimes you act like you crazy. I dont see why Jonny would even want one anyhow. I..."

"There's lots of things you dont see," Polly Ann replied bitterly, and headed on up the street, not even looking back to see if she were following.

Seth and Flip and Jonny had followed along behind Albert and Clarene, getting glimpses of her from time to time through the crowd of negroes and whites that now crowded the streets, seeing her small body twitching below the curvature of her back they had followed them down to Red's Place on Smoky Road where they had gone inside out of sight, and Seth and Flip stood outside talking about it and hesitating, Flip saying, "Hell, let's go on in."

But Seth hesitated while Jonny leaned up against the wall waiting, his hands in his pockets. Seth bit the match stick and thought, saying, "I kind of hate to cut in," and Flip said, "Hell, you dont cut in on one like that. You take turns. He's your uncle, aint he?" They finally decided and went into the place that had a wood cracked floor and little blue lights and a gaudy juke organ that changed colors from pink to green as the music blared out; they went back to the booth where they saw Albert who not only invited them but seemed very happy to see them, moving over so that Jonny could sit

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next to Clarene, saying, "You slide in here, Jonny boy. We're going to celebrate your birthday."

"Oh, is this him?" asked Charene. She smiled and put her hand on his arm. "I remember when I was sixteen," she said and lifted the bottle with one finger stuck out, taking a great gulp of it.

They stayed in Red's Place until nearly eight o'clock and when they came out, the festivities were blaring. It had developed in a very peculiar way. At first, it seemed as if the whole thing was going to be a flop. Roy Bolton and his boys had not shown up and the juke organ that they had put on the platform of the decorated truck did not work over the loud speaker, and when they did get it to working, the records wabbled so that it didn't even sound like music. Then while they were trying to repair that, one of the men from the Chamber of Commerce tried to entertain the crowd with a long joke, only the microphone went dead in the middle of it, and finally when he did get to tell the joke, he was so angry that nobody laughed much. They had sprinkled sawdust along the street but this did not work too well either as it only filled up the holes in the pavement. People milled around in little groups talking and looking on; high school students standing around became rather contemptuous; the country people talked of the same things they usually talked about, the negroes hung about on the corners greeting one another in their elaborately polite manners. It wasn't until Roy Bolton and his boys showed up that things started moving at all, and this was not because of the band but because of a man who fell off the truck trying to manage a keg of beer and broke his leg. The screaming siren of the ambulance did something to the crowd, and then somebody set off a string of firecrackers and Roy Bolton and his boys started playing, and within about fifteen minutes, what seemed at first a dismal evening developed into a melee that was worthy of this, the hundredth anniversary of Callville.

So that when Seth and Albert and Jonny and Clarene left Red's Place, it was like leaving a comfortable, cozy place into

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a mass of confusion. Somebody was setting off another string of firecrackers which exploded rapidly and loudly, the smoke and the smell of burnt powder drifting down the street. Mr. Biggers gave a whoop and began dancing with a woman next to the truck and then somebody set off the first skyrocket; it went screaming into the air with the fire out behind it along with moans from the crowd and then exploded with a noise that made everybody gasp. Albert laughed and pointed and gave a whoop himself, and Clarene grabbed onto Jonny's arm. The band swung out on "Rocky Bottom on Saturday Night" and the street became more crowded with people as they started to dance—men in overalls dancing stiffbacked with their wives, younger people bouncing around self-consciously, and one high school boy who held his head up high and his buttocks poked out, doing intricate steps with a good many twists and turns and dips; Mr. Biggers finally got up on the truck and did a buck dance all by himself, his brogan shoes banging up and down; they crowded in the street in an incongruous mass of farmers and storekeepers and clerks and women in country gingham with hard-knuckled hands and town women in prim dresses with soft diamonded hands; Roy Bolton sang, his voice cracking and yodeling, and the base fiddle player straddled his instrument as if riding a horse, beating on the side of it, while children screamed and swarmed around the truck. The storekeepers that were still open came to the doors and watched, and the negroes pointed and clapped each other on the back and finally got up a little dance of their own down on the corner; somebody else set off some firecrackers and the women squealed; the smoke floated down the street and another bunch went off. Mr. Travis, the bank president, donated two more kegs of beer, and watched, smiling to himself as he sat fat-stomached behind the wheel of his Buick as they opened it; Albert danced with Clarene, springing lightly and laughing, and then Seth broke in and danced with her, his hat still sitting cockwise on his head—she broke away from him finally and went over to get Jonny, taking him by the arm saying, "We're just about the same size, aint we?"

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Jonny followed her out, trying to swagger but only succeeding in looking stiff all over as he started to dance. She showed him how to hold her, saying, "I couldnt dance neither when I was sixteen. No, honey, like this. What's the matter, you never held a girl before? That's right. That's right. Oh, honey, you do learn fast!"

He moved around in circles with her while she led him, pushing up against him as if somebody were tickling her in the back. Jonny tried to follow, stumbling, glancing around while Albert and Flip and Seth yelled at him. Albert waved his arms around in the air and shouted, "Yessir, that's my present! That's what I'm going to get for you. By God, I remember my first time!" He cupped his hands around his mouth and called, "Go to it, Jonny boy. You the best they is!" He kept yelling and taking on until Flip finally looked sourly at him and made a remark about him trying to hog everything.

Albert made so much noise that people began looking at Jonny, and then Polly Ann, who was up near the truck saw him. She and Margaret were standing there with two boys, and Polly Ann's eyes lighted up and she punched Margaret viciously in the side, saying, "Look at Jonny. What did I tell you? What did I tell you?" Margaret looked at him, her lips coming together, and said lamely, "Oh, well, you aint got the money nohow," then turned back to her partner; Polly Ann stared another minute, then walked off by herself, leaving the group of them alone.

Jonny kept dancing until Flip got disgusted with it and went out and broke on them, taking Clarene in his arms rightly and whispering in her ear until she shoved away from him, saying loudly, "You keep away from me, you bastard!" and left him standing there. Albert laughed and Flip turned red. She went back and got Jonny again, and Flip turned, cursing her, and headed up the street away from the group. He started for the drugstore when he saw the pink satin dress of Polly Ann going through the door alone; he hurried along, went in and sat on a stool watching her and running his eyes up and down her as she fingered the cigarette lighter and

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asked the girl behind the counter how much it was. She looked a little angry when the girl said, "Aint it marked on the side?"

She turned it over. "Oh, yeah, I just didnt think it would be that much."

Flip edged over to her, glancing at it, saying, "How much?"

She looked at him coolly, but he was looking at the lighter and not at her. She said, "A dollar and a half."

"That's a right nice one all right. I think I'll get me one." He smiled at her. "You're too young to be smoking anyhow."

"Huh!"

"You are, I bet. I bet you dont even know how."

"That's how much you know."

They both looked at the box; he reached over to hold it, touching her hand so that at first she gave a jump; then, her eyes shifting, left her finger next to his as he wrapped it around hers. He said, "Yessir, if I didn't think you was too young, I would just buy it for you myself."

"I dont even know you," she said, still looking at the box.

"If we dance some, you'll get to know me. That is, if you aint too young."

"I aint too young," she said.

She stood in the door and waited for him, looking uneasily up and down the street; he came out in a minute sticking the package in his pocket. He led her toward the crowd, saying vulgarly, "We dont have to dance long, do we? There are other things to do, aint there?" giving her arm a squeeze, as she walked along, glancing up and down the street excitedly.

Jonny felt that he must be drunk. In his hand now he held the paper cup that had beer from the keg in it and whiskey that Clarene had poured into it; his head whirled and his face felt numb and he decided that now he was actually for the first time really and truly drunk. He would be dancing and then without knowing it, they would have stopped dancing and he would be standing with Albert on one side and Clarene on the other, talking and laughing, with Albert clapping him on the back. Everything in front of him was

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confused; firecrackers kept exploding and he looked up once to see another skyrocket just above his head; he never heard the sound of it—it seemed that it had just floated up there silently by itself. They were standing there and then he was going across the street again and he and Clarene were standing next to the truck with a paper cup in her hand pulling a bottle out of her purse again; then they were dancing and he could feel her body jerking convulsively every once in a while from the hiccups. He was drinking again with it going down smoother than before, and then he was dancing, floating, doing steps that he had never thought possible before. Then they were back at the truck and somebody had put a cigarette beween his lips but it wouldn't stay in because his lips were so numb; it fell out to the ground and then she was holding it in his mouth for him saying, "I'll light it for you, baby. Here you go, baby."

And after that they were on another street which he didn't recognize even though he knew every street in town, and Seth was sitting on the curbing. Nobody was around, and he couldn't figure out what Seth was doing just sitting there, and then he remembered Albert.

"No, you just wait a minute." It was Clarene standing close to him, holding his arms. They were up against a wall and she was kissing him. "Albert will be back in a minute. He had to go see the man." She was leaning up against him; he felt something stirring in him; then she was saying, "Wait, honey. Wait. Albert will be back in a minute. You're a little devil, aren't you? Oh, wait, wait just a minute. "

Then Albert appeared from somewhere and they went up the long dark steps that creaked under his feet. Somebody was holding him saying, "No, on down the hall," and then the next thing he knew he was sitting in a chair asleep, and Albert was rubbing a wet rag over his face, saying, "Is that the way a man should act? Boys sho have changed since I was a boy."

Then all of a sudden, except for being dizzy, he was sober. He knew he was sober even though he didn't know how he got over to the door, but he knew immediately what was

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behind the door. He gave a quick shove against Albert and fell against a chair trying to get around it, going for the hall. But then he was back at the other door again and Albert was laughing and Seth was holding him by the arm grinning at him, and then the door opened and Clarene's head stuck out; she said, "Come on now, honey. Now." And as he went into the darkened room, he felt her bare arms around his neck, her small bare body grinding painfully against him. He never knew how it was they got to the bed.

It was all over about two o'clock that morning, and the Hamiltons headed back for the truck from the different sections of town. The town was quiet now; the big truck with the platform on it had moved off and the ropes had been taken down; the crowds had gone home leaving the scattered mess, the beer soaked sawdust in the middle of the street, many paper cups, pieces of fireworks. Candy and bottles and pieces of ice cream cones littered the gutters and the sidewalks; the breeze came along from somewhere and picked up a newspaper and skidded it along the pavement like a small white dog running across the street. The lights burned dimly on the corners and from somewhere came the sound of a car shifting into second. Seth's iron taps clicked loudly on the sidewalk as they headed back for the truck which sat by itself now. Tom Hamilton was in the front seat, his hands on the wheel, looking around as if he were driving; Mamie sat next to him still holding the baby in her arms, her head falling down sideways and jerking back up again; in the back of the truck Margaret sat on one of the boxes with her head leaned up against the boards, her neck looking out of place and uncomfortable, her legs stretched out before her as she slept. Polly Ann sat hunched over on the box on the other side, her eyes wide open and knees together, staring at the corner light as she waited, holding the small package in her hands with her fingers clasped around it. She leaned forward listening, her lips tight together. She and Tom Hamilton both turned their heads hearing the steps coming closer, clicking on the pavement like somebody hitting a nail with a hammer; the

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noise echoed up and down the windblown and beer soaked streets like small sharp cracks from a rifle. Tom Hamilton quit chewing a second and twisted his head around while the steps got louder, watching the corner as the sound reached a peak and the three forms turned the corner, looming up black and shadowy against the light. Seth was in front and Jonny followed along behind, his shoulders hunched over, his hands in his pocket, having to stretch to keep up with the pace that Seth was setting. Albert rolled along something like a bear, his hair messed up, looking at the sidewalk, walking like a man who has long since given up all attempt to move of his own accord but just keeps going by habit.

They got to the truck and Seth reached up and put his hands on the boards and slung himself in and took his stand at the head of it; Albert went around to the side of the front door and opened it, causing Mamie to jerk up awake suddenly, and move over next to her husband, saying, "My lands, we been waiting..." but not bother to finish, only blinking her eyes again and letting her head nod back over. Albert got in, first having to pick up the lifeless form of Maddie Claude and drop her in his lap like a sack; he gave a deep sigh and then reached out and put his hand on the door and with what seemed like the absolutely final act that he could perform, hesitating a second to muster all his strength, slammed it shut with a loud clanging sound. Tom Hamilton hit the starter saying, "We done bout give yall out..." but Albert said nothing; he leaned back breathing heavily, resting, as if he did not yet have strength enough to close his eyes and sleep.

They drove off then up the main street where only two cars were left; they turned and went down the sawdust covered street moving aside to avoid one bottle broken in the middle of it; they went past the place where the platform truck had been, its tire marks now showing in the sawdust; they turned and headed out of town again under the ripped banner hanging down at the stoplight so that it read: "HUN-DR-" with the rest of the sign hanging down so that it couldn't be seen. They passed the monument where a man was

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sleeping and bumped over the railroad, going down the dark highway as the breeze, fresh and clean and cool, blew in whirls around the truck, the stars overhead bright and motionless. They settled down then for the ride back in the quietness, the motor sounding quiet somehow, the frogs and crickets setting up a chatter in the woods along the way. They drove past branchy places where the mist settled ghostily, Seth standing at the head of the truck letting the wind beat him in the face, Albert sitting in dry-eyed exhaustion; the wind whirled in the back blowing up some of the trash on the floor, getting some in Polly Ann's eye so that she gave a little cry and put her finger in it. Jonny looked at her and moved back beside her. He said roughly," Well, dont rub it then."

She snatched her head around at him angrily, almost crying. "Well, who asked you about it anyhow? Who asked you about it?"

"Well I dont care then. Who cares anyhow?" Jonny answered, turning his head aside from her. They didn't say anything else to each other until they had reached the place where they turned off; at that time Polly Ann abruptly and rudely shoved the little package at him and said, 'Here!"

He stared at her, not making any move to take it. "What's that?"

"It's your present."

"What is it?"

"Open it and see," she said angrily. "You can open it as good as I can."

He opened it sullenly, begrudgingly. When he took it out and looked at it, his face flushed somehow and he said quietly, "What makes you think I smoke?"

"If you dont want it, just throw it away then," she said to him. "Just throw it away."

"What would I want with a cigarette lighter? " he accused angrily. "Just because you run around smoking dont mean everybody..." Then he looked at her face and said, "Well, I didnt ask you to get it, did I? I didn't ask you to get it!"

Then she yelled, almost hysterically, her small hands clasped

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in her lap, leaning forward and staring at him with her eyes wild looking. "I dont care whether you want it or not! Throw it away! Throw it away then!"

"Well, you neednt yell at me," he shouted furiously, getting on his knees in the bottom of the truck. "I didnt ask you to get it, did I?"

"Throw it away! Throw it away!"

"What do I want..."

"Throw it away!"

She grabbed for it then, and both of them tussled over it trying to hold on to it; her voice broke out in a high wailing furious sob as she snatched it toward her, throwing her body from side to side. Jonny held on too, jerking at it, his voice cracking almost effeminately as he cried out in anger and tried to hold onto the package and jab his elbow in her stomach all at the same time. They snatched and jerked and screamed, their voices rising up in unreal chatter like squirrels; then they both at the same time began cursing each other, using words that neither had used before. She fell off the box then to the bottom of the truck and Jonny got his elbow in her breast and bored it in until she gave a stifled, pitiful cry. He pulled at the package and she jerked herself to her knees and snatched it and threw it so that it sailed over the side of the truck and into the bushes along the edge of the road; then she sat on the box, sobbing, staring at him and saying wildly, "There! There!" and he kept drawing back his fist at her as if to hit her, saying through clenched teeth, "You shut up now, goddamn you. Goddamn your soul!"

It was all over then. Seth had turned and looked at them with his eyes blank, showing neither approval or disapproval; Margaret woke up and opened her eyes and stared as if she couldn't move, her feet still spread out before her; she watched them on the floor beside her, watched them get back up and Jonny go up to the front of the truck again, saying nothing as if she were looking at a dream. Her eyes focused dully on Polly Ann's back for a moment after it was over; then she went back to sleep again.

They finally got to the house and got out, one by one,

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creaking, the truck sitting there making clicking noises in the motor as if it had not stopped yet. They passed into the house in stunned exhaustion; lights were turned on, then off again. The car settled down and quit clicking and the hounds stretched back out on the porch again to sleep. There was only the sound of the wind in the top of the pine trees, rustling lightly, mysteriously, god-like, like far off faint voices. Down in the woods somewhere a kill-dee began to cry, clear and lovely, piercing and deadly.

DEATH AMONG SHIPS

I am the cargo of infinite ships
That star bowed and blown race their teeth
Along a dolphin free ocean that dips
Over a continent. O risen wreath.

From a rebellious rail I trace the rings
Of procreation, undulation among seabirds
And migrating love. I strike my wings:
But these tar boards are night tied words.

And unridden animals of the ocean
Throw to a willing sun their wreath,
Matrimonial in wrestling water. To be seen
Where I their cargo compassed death.

—JOHN FAIRFAX

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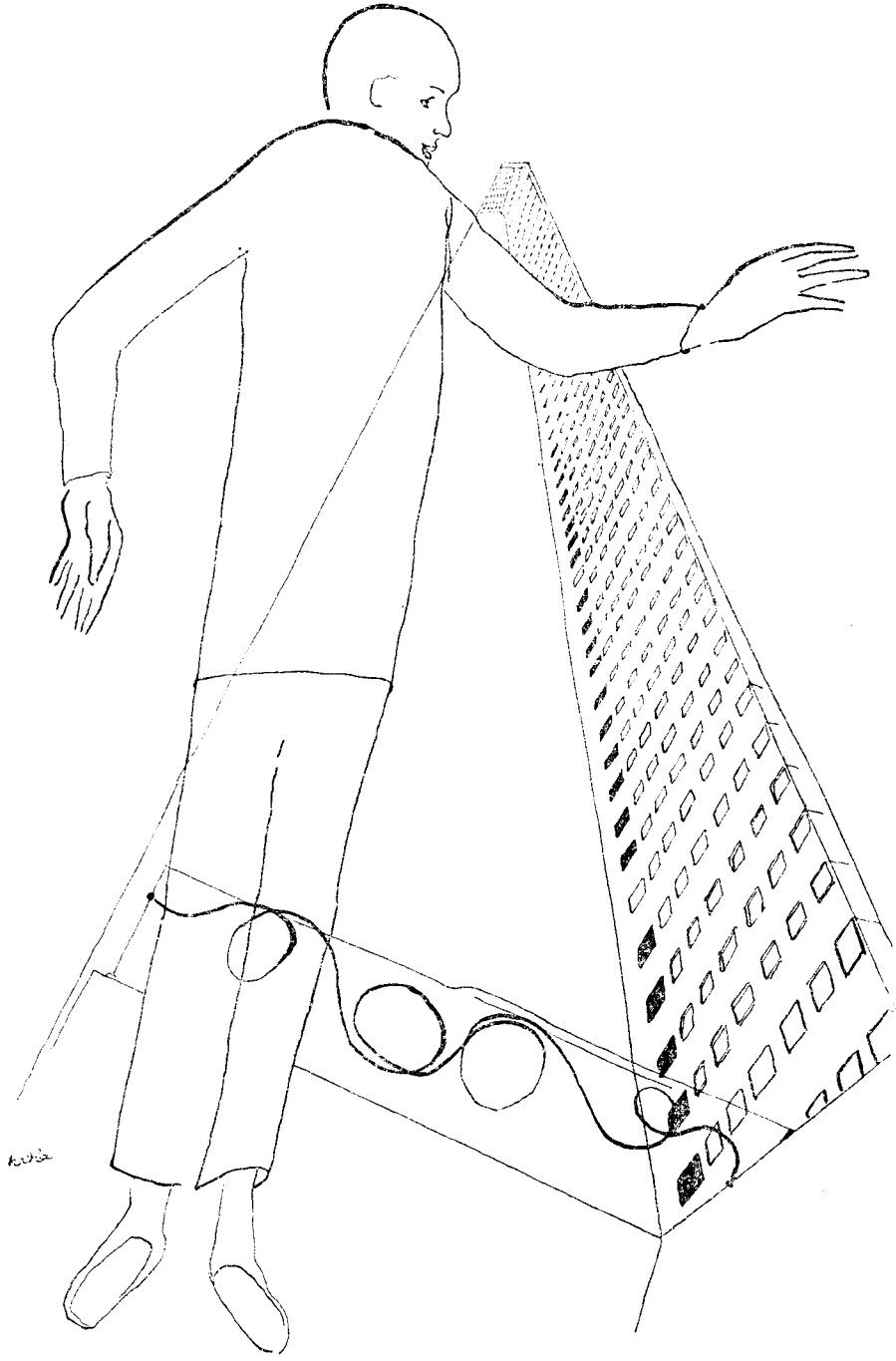

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DINO BUZZATI
Translated by Ben Johnson

SEVEN STOREYS

ONE March morning, at the end of a day's journey by train, Giuseppe Corte arrived in the city where the famous nursing home was located. He had a slight fever, but chose none the less to walk from the station to the hospital, carrying his overnight bag himself.

Detected in an early stage and negligible though his infection was, Giuseppe Corte had been counselled to seek treatment at the renowned sanatorium, to which sufferers from his disease were the only ones admitted. This thereby guaranteed exceptional competence on the part of the doctors and the soundest disposition of facilities within the hospital itself.

As he caught sight of it from a distance—recognizable from a photograph he had once seen in a prospectus—Giuseppe Corte was most favorably impressed. With a façade of projecting wings, the white seven-storeyed structure bore a vague resemblance to a hotel. It was surrounded by a girdle of tall trees.

After a brief physical examination, with promise of a more careful, more thorough one to follow, Giuseppe Corte was assigned to a cheerful room on the seventh and uppermost floor. His furniture there, like the wall paper, was bright and clean, and the armchairs were of wood with cushions upholstered in a polychrome material. His view dominated one of the loveliest quarters of the city. All was tranquil, hospitable and reassuring.

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Giuseppe Corte slipped into bed at once and, turning on the light above the bolster, began to read a book he had brought with him. Presently a nurse entered to ask if there were anything he desired.

No, nothing at all; but he quickly seized upon the opportunity to engage the girl in conversation, to question her about the nursing home. It was thus that he came to hear of its unique arrangement. The patients were distributed on various floors depending upon the gravity of their cases. On the seventh—that is, on the top floor—were those whose infections were very slight. The sixth handled cases which, if not grave, could by no means be neglected. Cases treated on the fifth floor were serious; and so on, all the way down, floor by floor. The condition of patients on the second, for instance, was extremely critical. And the first was reserved for those for whom there could be no hope.

This singular stratification, apart from greatly accelerating the hospital service, insured mildly infected patients against being disturbed by neighbors in agony, and guaranteed in each ward a homogeneous atmosphere. Moreover, it lent itself to a perfect graduation of treatment, the achievement of optimum results.

It followed, then, that the patients were divided into seven progressive castes. Each floor was like a little world in itself, with its own rules and special traditions which were meaningless on other floors. And since each section was under the direction of a different doctor, there had developed, but on an absolutely minor scale, subtle differences in the method of treatment, despite the fact that the director general had established in the institution one fundamental procedure.

When the nurse left, Giuseppe Corte, feeling that his temperature had subsided to normal, went to the window and looked out, not so much to view the city, new though it was to him, as in hope of catching a glimpse of other patients through the windows on the floors below. The structure of the building, with its projecting wings and recesses, lent itself to this sort of observation. Mostly, Giuseppe Corte's attention was focussed on the windows of the first floor, which

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looked to him to be very far away and were seen only slantwise. But there was nothing of interest. Nearly all of the windows were shuttered tight with grey, sliding persiennes.

Corte then noticed that a man had appeared at a window next to his. The two men looked at each other for some time with a growing sense of fellow-feeling, but neither knew just how to break the silence. At length, Giuseppe Corte summoned courage enough to ask:

"Have you just arrived yourself?"

"Oh no," answered the other. "I've been here for two months now..." He was silent for a moment or so, and then, uncertain how to continue, added: "I was looking at my brother."

"Your brother?"

"Yes," explained the stranger. "We entered together—quite an exceptional case, ours; but he got worse. Just think, he's already on the fourth!"

"The fourth?"

"Yes, the fourth floor," explained the man, enunciating these words with accents of such commiseration and horror as to evoke in Giuseppe Corte a feeling almost of terror.

"Is it really so serious on the fourth floor?" he ventured cautiously.

"Goodness," said the other, slowly shaking his head, "they're not desperate, those cases, but there's precious little to rejoice about."

"But then," pursued Corte, with the playfully detached manner of one who alludes to tragic events of no concern to him, "well, if they're that serious on the fourth floor, whom do they put on the first?"

"Oh," said the other, "the first is for patients who are dying —actually dying. In fact, down there the doctors don't have a thing to do. The only person that's kept busy is the priest. Naturally—"

"But there's hardly anybody there, anyway," interrupted Corte, as if eager for confirmation; "nearly all the rooms are closed."

"True, there aren't many at the moment, but they had a

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number this morning," replied the stranger, with a subtle smile. "Wherever you see that the persiennes are drawn, it means that someone has just died. Anyway, you can see, can't you, that the shutters on the other floors are all open?... But you'll excuse me now," he said, slowly withdrawing. "It's growing a bit chilly, I feel. I'm going back to bed. I wish you luck... the best of luck!"

The man disappeared from the sill and the window was closed energetically; a light came on in his room. Giuseppe Corte remained at his window, motionless, his eyes fixed on the drawn persiennes of the first floor; he stared at them with morbid intensity, trying to imagine the funereal secrets of that dreadful floor where patients were assigned to die; and a sense of relief pervaded him, knowing that he was so far away. Evening settled over the city. One by one, lights appeared at the thousand windows of the sanatorium; from a distance one might have mistaken it for a hotel-party. Only on the first floor, at the foot of the precipice, were there windows, scores of them, that remained blind and dark.

The results of his thorough physical examination reassured Giuseppe Corte. Inclined as a rule to expect the worst, he was already inwardly prepared for a harsh verdict, and would not, indeed, have been surprised if they had declared that he would have to be sent to the floor below. In fact his fever, though his general condition continued good, had shown no signs of subsiding. The doctor, however, chose to speak to him in terms that were amicable and encouraging. There was certainly, he said, an incipient trace of the disease, but it was very slight and would no doubt clear up in two or three weeks.

"Then I'm to remain on the seventh?" Giuseppe Corte had asked, anxious, at this juncture.

"Why, of course!" the doctor had replied, patting him in a friendly fashion on the shoulder. "Where did you expect to go? Certainly, not to the fourth?" he laughed, as if this were the worst, the most absurd of possibilities.

Giuseppe Corte, in fact, remained in the room to which he had originally been assigned. He came to know some of his

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fellow patients in the hospital on those rare occasions, in the afternoon, when he was permitted out of bed. He attended scrupulously to his treatment, doing his very utmost to hasten recovery; yet, despite his efforts, his condition seemed to remain unchanged.

About ten days had elapsed when the chief attendant of the seventh floor introduced himself to Giuseppe Corte. He wanted to know if Corte would grant him a favor, a purely personal favor: a lady with two children was scheduled to arrive the following day; they happened to have two free rooms, on either side of Corte's as it was, but they needed a third. Would Signor Corte mind moving to another, but equally comfortable, room?

Giuseppe Corte had, naturally, no objection; one room or another was quite the same to him, and there was a chance that he might find himself with a new and prettier nurse.

"Thanks ever so much," said the chief attendant, bowing lightly. "But from a person like you, I admit, so kind and gentlemanly a gesture scarcely surprises me. In an hour, then, if that is suitable to you, we'll proceed with the transfer. You realize that you'll have to go down to the next floor," he added, offhand, as if this were a detail hardly worth mention. "Unfortunately, we do not have any other vacant rooms on this floor. But this is only a temporary arrangement," he went on quickly, observing that Corte, suddenly sitting up in bed, was about to protest. "An absolutely temporary arrangement. Just as soon as we have a free room, and I believe we shall within two or three days, you'll be able to come back up."

"I must say," said Giuseppe Corte, smiling, to make it quite clear that he was not a child, "I must say that a transfer of this sort does not please me in the least..."

"But it is not being made on any medical grounds whatever; I understand perfectly what you mean, but this is no more than a gesture of courtesy toward a lady who does not wish to be separated from her children... Really," he added, laughing aloud, "you mustn't even think that there are other reasons."

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"Very well," said Giuseppe Corte. "Only, it looks to me like a bad sign."

Thus, Signor Corte went to the sixth floor. And although convinced that his transfer was in no way due to a worsening of his condition, he felt uneasy at the thought that between him and the world at large, the world of healthy people, an obstacle had been interposed. On the seventh floor, at the port of arrival, one still had contact somehow with the society of man; it might even be considered a kind of annex to the everyday world. But on the sixth, one had then entered the hospital proper: the mentality of the doctors, of the nurses and of the patients themselves was already a little different. Here, it was admitted, was a ward for real, for genuinely ill patients, slight though their infections were. In fact, from his first discussions there, with patients in the neighboring rooms, with attendants and doctors, Giuseppe Corte remarked the way the seventh floor was dismissed as a joke, as a place reserved for amateur patients suffering largely from imaginary complaints; only on the sixth did the hospital, so to speak, really begin.

And Giuseppe Corte understood that before returning upstairs, to his rightful place, according with the characteristics of his particular case, he would encounter, certainly, some difficulties; to return to the seventh floor, he would have to set in motion a complicated organism, however slight was the effort required of it; doubtless, had he not spoken up, no one would have dreamed of returning him to the floor of the "amateurs."

He was determined therefore not to yield on any of his rights, and not to let himself fall prey to habit. He was fond of pointing out to his ward mates that he would be with them for only a few days, that it had been merely his desire to accommodate a lady that accounted for his presence there, and that as soon as they had an empty room upstairs he was leaving them. His listeners would nod assent, but skeptically.

Giuseppe Corte's convictions were bolstered, however, by

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the opinion of his new doctor. The doctor himself admitted that Corte could perfectly well be assigned to the seventh floor; his infection was ab-so-lute-ly neg-li-gi-ble—syllabizing the words to give them due importance; fundamentally, though, he believed that Signor Corte stood to benefit more from the treatment on the sixth—

"I don't care to hear such talk as that," interrupted the patient determinedly at this point. "You said that the seventh floor is where I belong, and I want to go back!"

"No one has suggested anything but," the doctor returned. "Mine was purely and simply the advice, not of your doc-tor, but of a gen-u-ine friend! Your infection, may I repeat, is very slight—it would not be an exaggeration to say that you're not even ill; in my judgment, however, yours is distinguished from analogous cases by the rather sizeable area infected. Let me explain: the intensity of your infection is hardly worth mention, but the affected area is considerable; the destructive process in the cells"—it was Giuseppe Corte's first occasion to hear this sinister expression in the hospital—"the destructive process in your cells is absolutely in its initial stage; perhaps it has not even begun, but it may—mind you, only *may*—it may attack simultaneously over a vast area of the organism. It is for this reason alone that, in my opinion, you can be treated more effectively here, on the sixth floor, where our therapeutic methods are of a more specific and intensive nature than upstairs."

One day it was reported that, after prolonged discussion with his colleagues, the director general of the institute had decided to alter the subdivisional status of the patients. The grade, so to speak, of each patient was to be lowered a half-point. If, say, the patients on each floor were divided, according to the gravity of their cases, into two categories (this subdivision was actually made by the respective ward doctors, but for their own guidance), the lower half was automatically to be transferred to the floor below. For instance, half of the patients on the sixth floor, those cases that were somewhat more advanced than the others, would proceed to the fifth; and the more slightly infected patients on the seventh would

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go to the sixth. Giuseppe Corte was delighted: in such a complete shake-up, his return to the seventh floor would be more easily effected.

Upon mentioning this hope of his to the nurse, he received, however, a rude surprise. He was certainly scheduled for transfer, he learned, but not to the seventh; rather, to the floor below. For reasons which were beyond the nurse to explain, he had been included in the more serious half of the inmates on the sixth floor, and he would, therefore, have to proceed to the fifth.

Once recovered from the first shock, Giuseppe Corte gave vent to his fury. They had played a low trick on him! he screamed; he wanted to hear no further talk of a transfer downstairs! he was going home! he stood on his rights! and the hospital was without leave to ignore so blatantly the doctors' diagnoses!

He was still raging when the doctor came puffing in to calm him. He advised Corte not to excite himself, unless he wanted his temperature to rise, and he explained that there had been a misunderstanding, or in any case a partial one. He again admitted that Giuseppe Corte's rightful place was on the seventh floor, but added that his opinion of Corte's case—a purely personal opinion, naturally—was a little at variance with this judgment. Actually, Corte's infection might in a certain sense, of course, be classified in grade six, considering the magnitude of morbid manifestation. He himself, however, was utterly at a loss to explain why Corte had been included in the lower half of the sixth floor. Except, perhaps the administrative secretary, who had just that morning telephoned to ask about Corte's exact position—perhaps the secretary had made an error. Or more likely, the administration itself had "stepped down" his own recommendations, for, though an expert doctor, he was felt to be too lenient. In conclusion, the doctor counselled Corte not to let himself become overwrought, and to submit to the transfer with good grace; after all, it was not the floor to which a patient was assigned that mattered, but the actual status of his disease.

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And, added the doctor, as regarded his treatment, Giuseppe Corte would have no cause for regret; the doctor on the floor below was certainly more experienced: it was almost dogmatic that the ability of the doctors gradually increased—at least that's what the directors thought—as one descended. His room would be no less comfortable and elegant. The view equally spacious: only from the third floor was it obstructed by the girdle of trees.

Gripped by an evening fever, Giuseppe Corte listened carefully, but with a growing sense of weariness, to the various points the doctor raised by way of justifying the transfer. Eventually, Corte realized that he simply lacked strength and, still more, the will to oppose this unjust action. And he let himself be carried to the floor below.

Giuseppe Corte's sole comfort—a cold one, however—once he was installed on the fifth floor, lay in his knowledge that there was universal agreement, among the doctors, nurses and patients alike, that his was the least serious case in the entire ward. Within the confines of the fifth floor, in any case, he could consider himself by far the most fortunate inmate. Yet, on the other hand, rankling in his brain was the thought that, interposed between him and the normal world, there were now *two* barriers.

Spring advanced and the air grew warmer, but Giuseppe Corte had ceased to enjoy, as in the early days, lounging at the window; perfectly silly though his fears were, a peculiar shudder convulsed him whenever he looked at the windows of the first floor—most of them always closed —now that they were considerably nearer.

His condition appeared unchanged. But after he had spent three days on the fifth floor a rash broke out on his right leg, which, in the days that followed, showed no signs of healing. It was an infection, the doctors informed him—in no way related to his principal one: something, in fact, that could befall the healthiest person in the world. And it would require, that he might be rid of it in a few days, intensive digamma-ray treatments.

"But that can be done here, can't it?" asked Giuseppe Corte.

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"Certainly," replied the doctor, with pride. "Our hospital is equipped to handle anything. There's only one inconvenience."

"An inconvenience?" said Giuseppe Corte, with a vague presentiment.

"An inconvenience only in a manner of speaking," said the doctor, correcting himself. "I mean that this particular apparatus is located on the fourth floor. And I certainly wouldn't advise your making such a trek three times a day."

"Then there's nothing to be done, is there?"

"Well, I would recommend that you agree to move to the fourth floor until the rash clears up."

"*No!*" Giuseppe Corte exploded. "I'm fed up with forever going downstairs. I'd die first!"

"As you like," said the doctor, conciliatory, not wishing to irritate the patient; "but as your attending doctor, please note that I shall not permit you to climb the stairs three times a day."

And the worst of it was that his eczema, instead of healing, slowly began to spread. Constantly tossing in bed, unable to rest, Giuseppe Corte endured it, furious, for three days before finally having to yield. Then, voluntarily, he requested that the doctor have them proceed with the digamma-ray treatments, that he be transferred to the floor below.

Down there, Corte noted with unconfessed delight that he stood out as an exception. The other patients, their cases decidedly more serious than his, were not allowed up for a minute, whereas he was able to indulge in the luxury of strolling from his bed to the digamma-ray room, to the compliments and marvel even of the nurses.

He was careful to explain to his new doctor the highly specialized nature of his case, of a patient, that is, who actually belonged on the seventh floor but found himself on the fourth. And as soon as his rash was cured, he had every intention of returning upstairs. He would accept absolutely no more excuses. He, whose proper place was still on the seventh!

"The seventh, the *seventh!*" exclaimed the doctor, smiling;

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he had just finished examining Corte. "You patients are eternally exaggerating! May I be the first to state that you ought to be pleased with your condition. By your progress chart, I see, there has been no marked worsening. Still, between this and talk of the seventh floor—you'll pardon me if I am brutally frank—there's a considerable difference! You *are* one of our least critical cases; this, I quite admit, but you are a sick man all the same."

"Well," said Giuseppe Corte, his face reddening, "well, you—on what floor would you put me?"

"Heavens, it's not that easy to say. I've given you only a cursory examination. I should have to watch your progress for a week or more before hazarding an opinion."

"Agreed. But you know more or less," persisted Corte.

The doctor pretended for a moment to lose himself in thought, allowing Corte time to compose himself; then, nodding his head, he said deliberately: "Heavens. All right, to satisfy you we might actually put you on the sixth. Yes... yes," he added, as if persuading himself, "the sixth might do very well."

This, the doctor believed, would please his patient; instead, a look of dismay darkened Giuseppe Corte's face: it was apparent now that the doctors had deceived him; for here, this new one, obviously more competent and honest than the others, would *really* put him—it was perfectly clear—not on the seventh, but on the fifth, and perhaps in the *lower* fifth! His temperature that evening was high.

Giuseppe Corte's residence on the fourth floor marked his most tranquil period since arrival at the hospital. The doctor was a particularly likable person, friendly and attentive, and on numerous occasions spending entire hours discussing a wide range of subjects with his patient. Giuseppe Corte enjoyed their sessions together, during which he sought topics relating to his accustomed life as an attorney and man of the world; he sought to convince himself that he still fitted into the company of healthy men, that he still had ties with the world of business, that he was still concerned with current

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happenings. All this he sought —but without success. And unfailingly, their discussions would eventually return to his disease.

Meanwhile, his desire for improvement, any improvement whatever, had become obsessive. Although the digamma rays had arrested the spread of his eczema, they had not, unfortunately, succeeded entirely in removing it. Each day Giuseppe Corte would dwell at length on this with the doctor, making at the same time an effort to appear strong, even ironical —again without success.

"Tell me, doctor," he asked one day, "how is the destructive process in my cells getting along?"

"My word, what an ugly expression!" said the doctor, gently chiding him. "Where did you ever pick that up? It is not at all seemly—not at all!—especially from a patient. Please, I don't wish to hear such talk as that again from you."

"Very well, but you haven't given me an answer yet," objected Corte.

"Oh, I shall give you an answer at once," said the doctor civilly: "the destructive process in your cells, to repeat your horrible expression, remains in your case at a minimum—at an absolute minimum. Although I might be tempted to call it obstinate."

"Obstinate—do you mean chronic?"

"You mustn't try to put words into my mouth. I mean simply obstinate. But anyway, this applies to most cases. Even the mildest of infections may often require long and vigorous treatment."

"But tell me, doctor, when may I look for some improvement?"

"When?... Really, predictions in these cases are somewhat difficult to make... But look," he added, after a reflective pause, "I notice that you have a real mania to recover... and if I were not afraid of making you angry I would offer you a little advice—"

"Please, doctor, don't hesitate..."

"Very well then. I shall put it in the clearest possible terms. If I had this disease of yours—even the very mildest

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form of it—and found myself in this sanatorium, which is perhaps the best anywhere, I would ask on the very first day—on the very first day, mind you—to be assigned to one of the lower floors. I would see that I was sent directly to the—"

"First?" suggested Corte, with a forced smile.

"Oh no, not to the first!" replied the doctor, gently ironic "my word, no. But to the third or even, certainly, to the second. I guarantee you that the treatment down there is vastly superior, the facilities are more complete, more efficacious, the personnel more competent. You're aware, of course, who the guiding spirit of the hospital is?"

"Professor Dati, isn't it?"

"Quite true, Professor Dati. It was he who devised the method that is practiced here, he who designed the entire hospital... Well, Professor Dati, the master himself, is located, so to speak, between the first and second floors. His force as director radiates from that point. But I assure you, his influence does not extend up beyond the third floor; above the third, one might say that even his orders diminish, lose consistency, go astray. The heart of the hospital is downstairs, and downstairs is where one must be to receive the best treatment."

"In other words," said Giuseppe Corte, his voice quavering, "you recommend—"

"Consider one other thing," the doctor ran on dauntlessly, "consider that in your particular case there is your eczema that would need attention. A matter of no importance, I assure you, but rather irksome, and something which, in time, could weaken your morale; and you, of course, recognize that serenity of mind is essential to recovery. The digamma-ray treatments which I have been giving you have been only partially successful. Now why? It may be pure chance; however, it may be that the rays have not been sufficiently intense. Well then, the apparatus down on the third floor is considerably more powerful. The likelihood of getting rid of your eczema would be vastly increased. Then, once recovery has begun, you see, you have already cleared the

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most difficult hurdle. Once you have started up, it's quite unlikely that you'll slip back again. When you really feel better, there is nothing to prevent your rising back to us or still higher, according to your 'merits,' to the fifth, sixth—even, I daresay, to the seventh—"

"And you believe that this would really hasten the cure?"

"Why, there can be no doubt of it! I have already told you what I should do if *I* were in your boots."

The doctor presented arguments of this nature daily. And the moment ultimately came when the patient, no longer able to endure the eczema, and notwithstanding an instinctive reluctance to descend to the realm of even more serious cases, decided to act upon the doctor's advice and was transferred to the floor below.

Immediately he arrived, he detected in the ward a special note of gaiety, both in the nurses and the attending doctor, despite the fact that there, on the third floor, cause for concern about the patients under treatment was a good deal greater. In fact, with each passing day he remarked that the gaiety increased: his curiosity aroused, he waited a while, until he had gained a degree of confidence in the nurse, and then asked her why it was that they were all so gay.

"Oh, don't you know?" answered the nurse. "In three days we're going on vacation."

"Vacation?"

"Yes. For fifteen days the third floor will be closed down and the staff is to be let off. Each floor takes its turn."

"But the patients, what about them?"

"There are relatively few, so two floors will be combined."

"You mean, they'll put the patients of the third and fourth floors together?"

"No, no," said the nurse, correcting him: "the third and second. The patients up here will all be sent downstairs."

"Downstairs?" said Corte, pale as clay. "You mean, then, that I'll have to go down to the second?"

"Of course. Is there anything so unusual about that? When we come back, in a fortnight's time, you'll all return to

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your rooms up here. It doesn't seem such a dreadful thing to me."

Yet Giuseppe Corte—some mysterious instinct gave him notice—was assailed by fear. But since be could scarcely prevent the staff from taking its vacation, and convinced that the new digamma-ray treatments were proving beneficial—his eczema had almost completely vanished—, he did not dare to object to the new transfer. However, when he reached the second floor he pretended, despite the nurses' banter, that a notice would be tacked to the door that read:

GIUSEPPE CORTE OF THE THIRD FLOOR
TRANSIENT

This delusion of his was without precedent in the history of the sanatorium, but the doctors said nothing, full aware that in a nervous temperament such as Corte's the slightest annoyance was liable to produce shock.

It was a question now merely of waiting for fifteen days—not one day more or one day less. Giuseppe Corte set to counting them with dogged avidity as he lay abed, motionless for hours upon end, his eyes focussed on the furniture which, on that floor, was not modern and gay as in the upper wards, but was heavier, more solemn and severe in style. And occasionally he pricked up his ears, for he seemed to hear from the floor below, from the floor of the dying, from the "death cells," the indistinct rattle of agony.

All of this, naturally, had a tendency to depress him. And his increased uneasiness seemed to aggravate his illness: his temperature rose, his debility sank to new depths. From the window—it was now mid-summer and the window was nearly always open—neither the rooftops nor any of the houses of the city were visible: only the green wall of trees surrounding the hospital.

Seven days passed. One afternoon around two, the chief

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attendant and three nurses pushing a stretcher bed, suddenly entered. "Well, are we ready for the transfer?" asked the attendant in a tone of good-natured jest.

"What transfer?" asked Corte in a pinched voice. "What sort of joke is this? Don't those of us of the third floor still have a week before being sent back?"

"The third floor?" said the chief attendant, as if not quite understanding. "I have instructions to take you to the first. Look." And he held out a printed form ordering the patient's transfer to the floor below. It was signed by no less a personage than Professor Dati himself.

All of Giuseppe Corte's terror and uncontainable fury erupted into a long outburst that echoed down through the ward. "Calm yourself. For goodness' sake, calm yourself!" the nurses entreated. "There are patients here who are not well." But that alone could hardly have been expected to quiet him.

Finally he noticed the doctor in charge of the ward, a very kind and well-educated person. Informed of the transfer, he looked at the form and asked Corte what was happening. Then he turned angrily to the chief attendant and declared that there was some mistake, that he had not given any order to this effect, that for some time there had been an insufferable amount of confusion, and that he was kept completely in the dark about everything... Having thus taken his subordinate to task, he turned politely to Corte, begging him to accept his deepest apologies.

"Unfortunately, however," added the doctor, "unfortunately, Professor Dati left only an hour ago on a short holiday and will not be back for a couple of days. I am very, very sorry about this, but the Professor's orders cannot be countermanded. I assure you, though, he will be the first to deplore such an error! I can't understand how it could have happened!"

By now Giuseppe Corte was in the throes of a pitiable fit of trembling. He had lost complete control of himself. He was like a child, terror had so overwhelmed him. His sobs filled the room.

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And thus, by virtue of a monstrous error, he arrived at the last station. In the ward of the dying, he who actually, in light of his condition, according even to the diagnoses of the most uncompromising doctors, ought to have been assigned to the sixth, if not the seventh floor! The situation was so grotesque, really, that he felt at times a desire to roar with laughter.

The heat of the summer's afternoon crept slowly across the city. Lying abed, he gazed at the green of the trees through the window, with the sensation of having arrived in an unreal world, a world created of absurd, sterilized-tile walls, of cold mortuary passages, of white soulless figures. He had even a notion that the trees, which he thought he discerned through the window, were also unreal: he became finally convinced of it, in fact, after noticing that the leaves did not move.

This idea so upset him that he rang for the nurse and asked to be given his glasses, which he did not normally wear in bed; only then was he able to set his mind a little at rest: aided by his glasses, he was able to establish that the trees, after all, were real, and that the leaves, if ever so slightly, occasionally did flutter a little in the thin breeze.

After the nurse left, a quarter of an hour of deep silence ensued. Six floors, six terrible walls, although the result simply of a clerical error, lay upon Giuseppe Corte with their implacable weight. How many years—yes, now he must really think in terms of years—how many years would it take to regain the heights of that precipice?

But why now had the room suddenly begun to darken? It was still mid-afternoon. With great effort, for he felt himself to be paralyzed by a curious languor, Giuseppe Corte looked at his watch which lay on the night table beside the bed. It was three-thirty. Then he turned, facing the other way. He saw that the persiennes, obedient to some mysterious command, were slowly drawing to, shutting off the light.

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THE SLAVE COAST

(Rio Muni, West Africa)

Here, where confusion flowered in the rains,
The whip-mad captains steered for Teneriffe.
Their cargo was a cry. Knouts in the sheds
Were biting missionaries. Wind
Blew good excuses for the stay-at-homes
While their negotiants in palm-leaf hats
Jaded the Leeds and London cobblestones.
The Arab searched with sand between his toes
For dengue villages and typhus jails:
He signed no documents for sanity
But spread a breakbone fever through the seas.
Now he is slower with the lash than those
Who beat dead legend for conformity.
The slave is everywhere, no more confined,
And profit shackles all the slavers' sons
Who stroked his fob-and-seals, or climbed his knees
To mock the outraged mummy at his eyes.

—Lawrence P. Spingarn

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ANTHONY OSTROFF

THE HUNTING MEN

1

IT seems peculiar to me that it should all have begun with winter, as if some great, simple logic were implied, but so it did begin, with no more meaning then than I know now.

Perhaps I shouldn't count the death of Kobi, the sea otter, whom I loved and who was killed at the end of the book by a hunter someplace in the eternal winter of the arctic. I was too young then to know that neither Kobi, with his warm blood and sleek fur, nor his ice-water death was real. I was too young even to know that I hadn't read the book myself but that my father had read it to me. It was all one.

I remember, however, after I was old enough to distinguish between books and life, seeing hunters from a train window one winter afternoon. I was still a small boy. My aunt was taking me to Geneva, where she had lived once before I was born. She said she wanted to see the swans again, the many beautiful white swans on the lake there even though it was already December.

We took the train from Lyon, and I have no recollection of the trip beyond the impression of her great size across from me in the compartment, and the cold but still green landscape blurring past the window, and a gray-green stream rushing against us all the way. That is, no clear impression until we began getting into the mountains, for there, somewhere, I saw the hunters. They were walking across a field lightly covered with snow, with brown stubble sticking up from it. There were two of them and both were dressed in brown, with heavy coats and caps on, and they carried their guns in the crooks of their arms. They were not far from the train and I can remember them stopping by a fence they had to cross. Their gun stocks were deep brown and the barrels, pointing at the cold, white sky, were black, so black

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as nothing I had ever seen, and the snow was pale, pearl gray.

Far away there was a house and behind it, vaguely, the trees began, and then rock and the heavy cliffs. But I remember it only as the hunters. Only they were definite, and their guns, so black and sharp against the strange, incomplete snow.

2

My second hunting man was not myself. And yet it was, for I was hunter and hunted both that day.

I could call it my first day in America: all the others were dreams and incomplete over the great, mysterious length of time, twice what my age had been when, so small, I first saw hunters in a country that was, even then, no longer home.

On this day I went to a gravel pit on the edge of the town where we lived. I went there because it was hilly and seemed wild and deserted to me and I could imagine there were Indians or that I was a lonely cowboy going across the wilderness. It was early autumn, a chilly day with a severe sky, as if it would rain a thin, cold rain for a long time before the sun could show again.

I had just crawled down one of the cuts, to the bottom of the pit, and was rounding the side of the highest clay and gravel cliff when I heard shots. I had never heard real gunshots before but these I knew simply because they could be nothing else. Then I saw a man with a gun. He was aiming at a row of bottles set up on one of the gravel banks on the far side of the pit. I stood still and watched him while he shot three times, hitting one of the bottles. Then, because it seemed I had to, I walked over to him. He heard my footsteps in the gravel before I reached him, and turned around to watch me come.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

He looked me in the face. "Practicing," he said.

"Practicing for what?" I demanded.

His gaze grew hard. "For what, *Sir*," he said coldly.

"For what, Sir," I said.

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"You must always say *Sir* to show respect," he said.

"Well, what are you practicing for ?" I asked.

He swung his gun around and pointed it at me. "Do you want me to shoot you?" he said.

"No, Sir," I said.

He turned back and aimed at the bottles again. "I'm practicing for hunting," he said.

I watched him and he shot again and hit a bottle. It broke like a fountain.

3

How strange they are, the images that come to mind!—as if the whole world never was except by my young, unwilling permission, by an accident of my will. But how can I continue? Let me say that two years later I was a hunter myself.— I will put it, the best I can, just as it was.

I was a hunter. My parents would never have approved, but we had an English spaniel and it seemed to me that since all spaniels were hunting dogs and Tuck was a very smart and loving dog he should be given a chance to follow his true métier. So one day I borrowed a .22 rifle from a school friend and went out in the country with Tuck.

It was a fine fall day with bright sun and a high, polished sky. We walked out along a railroad track from town and the grass on the sides of the embankment and in the deep, bordering ditches was brown and gold and red. I shot once or twice at telephone poles, and once at a glass insulator on a pole, which I missed. But I was afraid to shoot more without a real target, though there was no one in sight and only one farmhouse in the distance, many fields away. I was afraid someone would hear me, and that hunting was not allowed.

Tuck kept whining and sporting and tore through the tall weeds as if he were crazy, bounding up and down to see and frequently coming down on all fours and stopping and looking back over his shoulder to make sure I was watching him. He had no system and I thought he must have lost his instinct for hunting, for from what I'd heard of hunting dogs they worked very systematically. I was disappointed and for

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awhile I went down and walked along one of the ditches myself, hoping to scare up a bird. But burrs got on my socks and into my shoes and I decided walking in the deep grass and weeds was too much and went back up along the tracks.

I was hunting for pheasant. I had never seen a pheasant except in a picture at school, but they were what everyone hunted there so I was doing the same: and I remember, as I walked in the clear, sharp air, struggling with a confused and burning sense of fate that both thrilled and wearied me.

Tuck was no good and seemed only to be covering himself with burrs. He was getting very tired; his tongue lolled far out of the side of his mouth and his flanks heaved heavily, but still he continued his wild, aimless rushes into the undergrowth. I felt at last it all was a failure and had already decided to go back home when I threw my third rock into the weeds ahead of where I was walking. I had thrown the first two on the chance of scaring up a pheasant, but I threw the third with resignation. And yet, as if by a miracle, at the third there was a crackling of the dried brush, and a beating of wings, and a pheasant flew forth!

I gasped at its weight and shape and brilliant colors in the air and watched its violent flight for what seemed to me a very long time, though it was only an instant before I raised my gun and fired. I made myself honestly try to hit it, but I missed, of course.

Afterward I felt weak and ashamed for I was glad I had missed the bird which might have been a hen and against the law, and because I could have done nothing with it but left it there had I hit it, and because I would have had to show it to Tuck who knew nothing about hunting.

When we got home, as the sun was setting and it was turning cold, Tuck was sick. His nose was hot and his eyes swollen and he seemed to have no life left in him he was so tired or the burrs pained him so much.

4

The last time I shamed myself as a hunter was once when I was visiting a friend in the country. I was still a boy,

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though a big boy then, I thought. It was a cold, gray November day and we went hunting through the woods and hills with bow and arrow. We had only target arrows which stuck in the trees so deeply that we often broke their points in pulling them out. It was impossible that we should ever get close enough to any game to shoot at it—if there were any game. But strangely enough, at the top of a hill we saw a rabbit. It was small and gray and we chased it. It zigzagged desperately and aimlessly for a moment and then dashed into a bramble right in front of us. The grass had been cropped around the bramble by sheep, and the bush itself was no more than four feet across, and in an instant we stood at its edge, our bows drawn, aiming at the rabbit two arrow lengths away. Then neither of us shot and I looked at Peter and said, "You shoot it."

"No, go ahead," he said.

A minute passed and a faint, strained smile moved Peter's lips. "We should give it a chance," he said.

"All right. Chase it out."

We stamped on the ground and shouted at it, but it wouldn't move. It sat there, wild-eyed and trembling, until at last Peter reached in with his bow and touched it. Then it bolted out. We both shouted "Now!" but neither of us shot until it was going over the crest of the hill and our arrows couldn't catch it. We were both ashamed at being only boys.

5

So it was with hunting in winter and fall through all my childhood. Then I always thought there could never be hunting in summer or spring for they were seasons for other things—it was enough to find it in winter when spring was never ahead.

But at last I was undeceived and I did see hunting men in spring (just as did Peter who became, they say, a beautiful hunter, though he never talks of it himself and now hunts silently and alone in the bewildering forests of his single room). I wish to make it clear that I had never dreamed truth could be found amid the whirling flame and smoke and

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noise of our astonishing numbers. Perhaps this was my failure. There is little that can be said: When the moment came that it was quiet, and the confusion cleared, I saw—beyond two enemies cold for the limitless day—the hillside: green; and before me, green, young blades of grass among the ripped earth and stone beside a simple, ruined wall.

What I wish to explain is something I cannot understand. What has happened and what has not? I don't even know which question should be asked. Did I really see the hunters when I was very small, or were the spring and summer fancies of my boyhood times that waited until now to be invented? I had surely known, for all my wishful thoughts, that everywhere, unseen by the world, there were men who went out with guns at the proper season, which was always somewhere.

But still there is no meaning. I am left with an attitude, an image, back in my beginning. How reasonable it seems!

Two days ago I arrived in France, the Valley of Chevreuse, the fields where I as a tiny child, was taken sometimes to play. It was reason that brought me back to France, but I shall not dwell on that. This is, in fact, the last I shall say of the whole matter.

It was the last day of October, and raining. The countryside was heavy with rain and the weight of leaves preparing to loose their green and fall, and as I sat in a lonely cafe near the remains of the Chateau there, overlooking the valley, two men came out of a wood, followed by a dog.

I was only myself. Why did I not see a blaze of summer, a thick, tropical world swarming with growth and heat, and, beating through it, everywhere, hunters hunting down all life, or, silent and terrible, men hidden, lying in wait in the steaming places, ready to leap and rend, spill the world's sad blood again and again?

There is no answer. None of this was in my mind. I was only myself—or someone else—and saw only the silence, the hush of rain over all the subdued and beautiful countryside, over even the two men and their dog. As I looked on them I saw that the dog, which was white and brown, was sleek with

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the rain and wore a gentle look on her cold and dripping face. The men were ruddy and wore brown corduroy coats and grey caps and carried their shotguns over their arms, pointing at the ground but not broken open. They walked down a road that curved back into the trees where the hill sloped down, bearing the forest and the rain to the far valley floor, and as I watched them go I was surprised that they were hunters. — I hadn't thought they hunted there.

But how can I explain it? Nothing has been changed. Time has gone by—like the cold, beautiful stream rushing against us all the way to Geneva that first time I saw hunting men—carrying everything past, even from up ahead; everything to where we have been, are coming from, to what we have left behind us. It is confused and all one, like rushing water.

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Pericomb ?

day, the eighth, I had information that Jones would hold a mass meeti at the centre. And a phone call from the police at Lilmouth to look out for trouble. The Lilmouth gang was on the way to East Tarbiton work centre. Jones was going to talk. This was a gang that had made troubl in Lilmouth - the only trouble they had.

The unemployment centre was a scheme by the Emergency Committee, i.e. Nimmo. He had started it some months before, a plan for workshops recreation rooms for unemployed, clothes mending ~~rooms for unemployed, old clothes distribution~~, canteens and nurseries scattered about in a lot of odd spots around East Tarbiton and Lilmouth An old chapel in Tarbiton and a sixteen-room villa just outside, a half-ruined cloth factory at Batwell and the ~~Manor House~~ Old Hall at Ferrypor Lady Gould, chairman General Welfare Committee; ~~Countess of Lilmouth~~, Countess of Lilmouth, Mrs. James Call chairman Canteen Committee; Mrs. William Jones, chairman Children's Care. Nimmo's usual game, hang a nosebag on everyone, keep 'em quiet. Feeding their own fancies and ~~getting their~~ facing their own importance. But trouble, a test of fun th's test. Mrs. Pericomb wanted to put Relief ill all the nurseries, Lady Gould Red Cross candidates full of high minds & low Empiricism and the Countess had a string of colonels uncles quite ready to fight the war from the desk of ~~the Club~~ the Old Club. ? Rev Pericomb

[1] The above extract is part of the manuscript *Not Honour More*, the work on which Mr. Cary is presetly engaged.

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THE ART OF FICTION VII

JOYCE CARY

Joyce Cary, a sprightly man with an impish crown of grey hair set at a jaunty angle on the back of his head, lives in a high and rather gloomy house in North Oxford. Extremely animated, Mr. Cary's movements are decisive, uncompromising and retain some of the brisk alertness of his military career. His speech is overwhelming: voluminous and without hesitation or effort. His rather high voice commands attention but is expressive and emphatic enough to be a little hard to follow. He is a compactly built, angular man with a keen, determined face, sharp, humorous eyes and well-defined features. His quick and energetic expressions and bearing create the feeling that it is easier for him to move about than to sit still and that it is easier for him to talk than to be silent, even though, like most good talkers, he is a creative and intelligent listener.

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His house, a Victorian building with pointed Gothic windows and dark prominent gables, stands opposite the University cricket ground, and just by Keble College. It is a very characteristically North Oxford house, contriving to form part of a row without any appearance of being aware of its neighbors. It lies only a little back from the road, separated from it by a small overgrown garden, thick with bushes. The house and garden have all the air of being obstinately, 'property', self-contained and a little severe. So we weren't really surprised at having to wait on the porch and ring away at the bell three or four times; or to learn, when Mr. Cary himself eventually opened the door, that his housekeeper was deaf. Mr. Cary is obviously quite unawed by his house, and seems to have transformed its interior to meet his taste with the minimum of actual alteration. A very large grand piano half fills the comfortable room into which we were led. It has one lamp for the treble, another for the bass. The standard of comfort is that of a successful member of the professional class; the atmosphere a little Edwardian, solid, comfortable, unpretentious, with no obstrusive bric-a-brac. Along one wall is a group of representational paintings done by Cary himself in the past. He has, he says, no time for painting now. He is the kind of man who knows exactly what he has time for. So we got down to the questions right away.

INTERVIEWERS

Have you by any chance been shown a copy of Barbara Hardy's essay on your novels in the latest number of 'Essays in Criticism'?

CARY

On 'Form'. Yes I saw it. Quite good I thought.

INTERVIEWERS

Well, setting the matter of form aside for the moment, we were interested in her attempt to relate you to the tradition of the family chronicle. Is it in fact your conscious intention to recreate what she calls the pseudo-saga?

CARY

Did she say that? Must have skipped that bit.

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INTERVIEWERS

Well, she didn't say 'consciously', but we were interested to know whether this was your intention.

CARY

You mean, did I intend to follow up Galsworthy and Walpole? Oh, no, no, no. Family life, no. Family life just goes on. Toughest thing in the world. But of course it is also the microcosm of a world. You get everything there—birth, life, death, love and jealousy, conflict of wills, of authority and freedom, the new and the old. And I always chose the biggest stage possible for my theme.

INTERVIEWERS

What about the 18th century novelists. Someone vaguely suggested that you recaptured their spirit, or something of that kind.

CARY

Vaguely is the word. I don't know who I'm like. I've been called a metaphysical novelist, and if that means I have a fairly clear and comprehensive idea of the world I'm writing about, I suppose that's true.

INTERVIEWERS

You mean an idea about the nature of the world which guides the actions of the characters you are creating?

CARY

Not so much the ideas as their background. I don't care for philosophers in books. They are always bores. A novel should be an experience and convey an emotional truth rather than arguments.

INTERVIEWERS

Background —you said background.

CARY

The whole set-up—character—of the world as we know it. Roughly, for me, the principal fact of life is the free mind. For good and evil, man is a free creative spirit. This produces the very queer world we live in, a world in continuous creation and therefore continuous change and insecurity. A perpetually new and lively world, but a dangerous

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one full of tragedy and injustice. A world in everlasting conflict between the new idea and the old allegiances, new arts and new inventions against the old establishment.

INTERVIEWERS

Miss Hardy complains that the form shows too clearly in your novels.

CARY

Others complain that I don't make the fundamental idea plain enough. This is every writer's dilemma. Your form is your meaning, and your meaning dictates the form. But what you try to convey is reality—the fact plus the feeling, a total complex experience of a real world. If you make your scheme too explicit, the framework shows and the book dies. If you hide it too thoroughly, the book has no meaning and therefore no form. It is a mess.

INTERVIEWERS

How does this problem apply in *The Moonlight*?

CARY

I was dealing there with the contrast between conventional systems in different centuries—systems created by man's imagination to secure their lives and give them what they seek from life.

INTERVIEWERS

Didn't the critics call Rose a tyrant?

CARY

Oh, they were completely wrong about Rose. She was a Victorian accepting the religion and the conventions of her time and sacrificing her own happiness to carry them out. A fine woman. And no more of a tyrant than any parent who tries to guide a child in the right path. That religion, that system, has gone, but it was thoroughly good and efficient in its own time. I mean, it gave people good lives and probably all the happiness that can be achieved for anybody in this world.

INTERVIEWERS

Are the political aspects of your work controlled by the same ideas?

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CARY

Religion is organized to satisfy and guide the soul—politics does the same thing for the body. Of course they overlap—this is a very rough description. But the politician is responsible for law, for physical security and in a world of tumult, of perpetual conflict, he has the alternatives, roughly again, of persuading people or shooting them. In the democracies, we persuade. And this gives great power to the spellbinder, the artist in words, the preacher, the demagogue, whatever you call him. Rousseau, Marx, Tolstoy, these were great spellbinders—as well as Lacordaire. My Nimmo is a typical spellbinder. Bonser was a spellbinder in business, the man of imagination. He was also a crook but so are many spellbinders. Poets have started most of the revolutions, especially nationalist revolutions. On the other hand, life would die without poets, and democracy must have its spellbinders.

INTERVIEWERS

Roosevelt?

CARY

Yes, look what he did—and compare him with Wilson. Wilson was a good man, but he hadn't the genius of the spellbinder—the art of getting at people and moving the crowd.

INTERVIEWERS

Is Nimmo based on Roosevelt?

CARY

No, he belongs to the type of all of them—Juarez, Lloyd George, Bevan, Sankey and Moody, Billy Graham.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you base your characters on people you know?

CARY

Never, you can't. You may get single hints. But real people are too complex and too disorganized for books. They aren't simple enough. Look at all the great heroes and heroines, Tom Jones, Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina, Baron Charlus, Catherine Linton, they are essentially characters from fable, and so they must be to take their place in a formal

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construction which is to have a meaning. A musician does not write music by trying to fit chords into his whole. The chords arise from the development of his motives.

INTERVIEWERS

In one of your prefaces you said, didn't you, that Jimson's father came from life?

CARY

I met an old man, an artist who had been in the Academy and a success, and was then ruined by the change of taste when the impressionists created their new symbolic school. But I didn't use him in my book, I don't know anything about his character, only his tragedy. A very common one in this world. (*suddenly*). The French seem to take me for an existentialist in Sartres' sense of the word. But I'm not. I am influenced by the solitude of man's minds, but equally by the unity of their fundamental character and feelings, their sympathies which bring them together. I believe that there is such a thing as unselfish love and beauty. I am obliged to believe in God as a person. I don't suppose any church would accept me, but I believe in God and His grace with an absolute confidence. It is by His grace that we know beauty and love, that we have all that makes life worth living in a tough, dangerous, and unjust world. Without that belief I could not make sense of the world and I could not write. Of course, if you say I am an existentialist in the school of Kierkegaard, that is more reasonable. But existentialism without a god is nonsense—it atomizes a word which is plainly a unity. It produces merely frustration and defeat. How can one explain the existence of personal feelings, love and beauty, in nature, unless a person, God, is there? He's there as much as hydrogen gas. He is a fact of experience. And one must not run away from experience. I don't believe in miracles. I'm not talking here of faith cures—but some breach in the fundamental consistency of the world character which is absolutely impossible. I mean absolutely. (*with emphasis*). God is a character, a real and consistent being, or He is nothing. If God did a miracle He would deny His own nature and the universe would simply blow up, vanish, become nothing. And we can't even

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conceive nothingness. The world is a definite character. It *is*, and therefore it is *something*. And it can't be any other thing. Aquinas tells you all the things that God can't do without contradicting himself.

INTERVIEWERS

But about existentialism.

CARY

Kierkegaard states the uniqueness of the individual and I stand by that.

INTERVIEWERS

That's what you meant then when you said that what makes men tick should be the main concern of the novelist? The character's principle of unity?

CARY

And action, their beliefs. You've got to find out what people *believe*, what is pushing them on... And of course it's a matter, too, of the simpler emotional drives. Like ambition and love. These are the real stuff of the novel, and you can't have any sort of real form unless you've got an ordered attitude towards them.

INTERVIEWERS

But the fundamental beliefs are not always the most apparent, or, it seems to us, the most successful of the achievements in the novel. We were expecting, for instance, a much closer analysis of the religious beliefs of Brown in *To be a Pilgrim*. But we felt, in fact, that what came across most successfully were the emotional responses of people to people—compelling, for instance, Lucy to follow Brown.

CARY

The details were there once. That is, Brown's arguments were there, and Lucy's response. But Lucy was only one character, one motive in the symphony. And also I was up against the problem of explicit statement. I may have cut too much but the book is long and packed already. The essence of Lucy was her deep faith. She wasn't the kind of person who can float along from day to day like a piece of newspaper or a banana skin in the gutter. And in the book,

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I had her feelings expressed. But I cut them somewhere in the rewriting. I rewrite a great deal and I work over the whole book and cut out anything that does not belong to the emotional development—the texture of feeling. I left too much of the religious argument in *Except the Lord* and people criticize it as too explicit or dull.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you find in those later stages that you're primarily concerned with the more technical side of 'form'? With, for example, managing the flash-back (and do you think, incidentally, that you owe that particular trick to the films—I believe that you worked on a film in Africa?)

CARY

No, I don't really think it has anything to do with films. The flash-back in my novels is not just a trick. In, for example, *The Moonlight*, I used it in order to make my theme possible. It was essential to compare two generations. You can't do that without a flash-back contrast; the chronological run through by itself is no good.

INTERVIEWERS

In the preface to *Herself Surprised* you mentioned a technical difficulty you found yourself in. You wanted to show everything through the eyes of Sara but found that to make her see everything diluted her character. This was the soliloquy as flash-back. This struck us as the same dilemma as James found himself in in writing *What Maisie Knew*. Is this a just parallel? Do you read James?

CARY

Yes, but James is not very remarkable technically. He's one of our very greatest novelists but you will not learn much by studying his technique. *What Maisie Knew*, that was one of the packed ones, wasn't it? Almost too packed. I enjoyed its intense appreciation of the child's nature, and the cruel imbecility of the world in which she was thrown about. But on the whole I prefer the beautifully clear atmosphere of a book like *The Europeans* or *Daisy Miller*—all James is in *Daisy Miller*.

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INTERVIEWERS

Have you read *The Bostonians*? There was the spellbinder.

CARY

No, I haven't read that.

INTERVIEWERS

The Princess Casamassima?

CARY

I'm afraid I haven't read that either. Cecil is always telling me to read her and I must. But I read James a good deal. There are times you need James just as there are times when you must have Proust—in his very different world of change. The essential thing about James is that he came into a different, a highly organized, a hieratic society and for him it was not only a very good and highly civilized society, but static. It was the best the world could do. But it was already subject to corruption. This was the centre of James' moral idea—that everything good was, for that reason, specially liable to corruption. Any kind of goodness, integrity of character, exposed that person to ruin. And the whole civilization because it was a real civilization, cultivated and sensitive, was fearfully exposed to frauds and go-getters, brutes and grabbers. This was his tragic theme. But my world is quite different—it is intensely dynamic, a world in creation. In this world, politics is like navigation in a sea without charts and wise men live the lives of pilgrims.

INTERVIEWERS

Have you sympathy with those who most uncompromisingly pursue their own free idea whatever the opposition?

CARY

I don't put a premium on aggression. Oh, no, no, no. I'm no life-force man. Critics write about my vitality. What is vitality? As a principle it is a lot of balls. The life-force is rubbish, an abstraction, an idea without character. Shaw's tale of life-force is either senseless rubbish or he really means Shaw. Shaw as God's mind. The life-force doesn't exist. Show me some in a bottle. The life of the world is the nature of God, and God is as real as the trees.

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INTERVIEWERS

Which novelists do you think have most influenced you?

CARY

Influenced? Oh lots. Hundreds. Conrad had a great deal at one point. I've got a novel upstairs I wrote forty years ago in Africa, under his influence. But I read very few novels nowadays. I read memoirs and history. And the classics. I've got them at my finger-tips and I can turn up the points I want. But I don't read many modern novels. I haven't time. But those I do read are often very good. There is plenty of good work being done and in Britain the public for good work is enormously increased in my life time—especially in the last thirty years.

INTERVIEWERS

Do you find then that conversation with the novelists of today helps?

CARY

Conversation?

INTERVIEWERS

I mean apart from the personal stimulus, do you find that what they have to say helps to resolve technical problems?

CARY

Oh no. Not particularly. We chatter. But you have to work problems out for yourself, on paper. Put the stuff down and read it — to see if it works. A complicated job of construction.—Later I'll show you my apparatus.

INTERVIEWERS

Is there only one way to get a thing right? How close is form?

CARY

That's a difficult question. Often you have very little room for manœvre. See Proust's letter to Mme. Strauss about Swann, saying he had to make Swann ridiculous. A novelist is often in Proust's jam.

INTERVIEWERS

You are a determinist—you think even novelists are pushed by circumstances.

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CARY

Everyone but a lunatic has reason for what he does. Yes, in that sense I am a determinist. But I believe, with Kant, that the mind is self-determined. That is, I believe intensely in the creative freedom of the mind. That is indeed absolutely essential to man's security in a chaotic world of change. He is faced all the time with unique complex problems. To sum them up for action is an act of creative imagination. He fits the different elements together in a coherent whole and invents a rational act to deal with it. He requires to be free, he requires his independence and solitude of mind, he requires his freedom of mind and imagination. Free-will is another matter—it is a term, or rather a contradiction in terms which leads to continual trouble. The will is never free—it is always attached to an object, a purpose. It is simply the engine in the car—it can't steer. It is the mind, the reason, the imagination that steers.

Of course, anyone can deny the freedom of the mind. He can argue that our ideas are conditioned. But anyone who argues so, must not stop there. He must deny all freedom and say that the world is simply an elaborate kind of clock. He must be a behaviourist. There is no alternative, in logic, between behaviourism, mechanism, and the personal god who is the soul of beauty, love and truth. And if you believe in behaviourism, none of these things have any real existence. They are cogwheels in the clock, and you yourself do not exist as a person. You are a delusion. So take your choice. Either it is personal or it is a delusion—a delusion rather difficult to explain.

INTERVIEWERS

How do you fit poetry into this. I once heard you describe it as "prose cut up into lines". Would you stick to that?

CARY

Did I say that? I must have been annoying someone. No. I wouldn't stick to it.

INTERVIEWERS

Anyway, at what stage of your career did you decide to write novels rather than anything else?

CARY

What stage?... Oh, I've been telling stories ever since I

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was very small. I'm telling stories now to the children of a friend of mine. I always tell stories. And I've been writing them from childhood. I told them to other children when I was a child. I told them at school. I told them to my own children and I tell them now to the children of a friend.

INTERVIEWERS

Aissa Saved was the first one you published?

CARY

Yes, and that was not until I was forty. I'd written many before, but I was never satisfied with them. They raised political and religious questions I found I could not answer. I have three or four of them up there in the attic, still in MS.

INTERVIEWERS

Was this what made you feel that you needed a 'new education'?

CARY

At twenty-six I'd knocked about the world a good bit and I thought I knew the answers, but I didn't know. I couldn't finish the novels. The best novel I ever wrote—at least it contained some of my best stuff—there's about a million words of it upstairs, I couldn't finish it. I found that I was faking things all the time, dodging issues and letting my characters dodge them.

INTERVIEWERS

Could you tell us something about your working methods?

CARY

Well—I write the big scenes first, that is, the scenes that carry the meaning of the book—the emotional experience. The first scene in *Prisoner of Grace* was that at the railway station, when Nimmo stops his wife from running away by purely moral pressure. That is, she became the prisoner of grace. When I have the big scenes sketched I have to devise a plot into which they'll fit. Of course often they don't quite fit. Sometimes I have to throw them out. But they have defined my meaning, given form to the book. Lastly I work over the whole surface.

INTERVIEWERS

When does the process, the book, start?

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CARY

Possibly years ago—in a note, a piece of dialogue. Often I don't know the real origin. I had an odd experience lately which gave me a glimpse of the process, something I hadn't suspected. I was going round Manhattan—do you know it?

INTERVIEWERS

Not yet.

CARY

It's an island and I went round on a steamer with an American friend, Elizabeth Lawrence, of Harper's. And I noticed a girl sitting all by herself on the other side of the deck—a girl of about thirty, wearing a shabby skirt. She was enjoying herself. A nice expression, with a wrinkled forehead, a good many wrinkles. I said to my friend, "I could write about that girl—what do you think she is?" Elizabeth said that she might be a school teacher taking a holiday, and asked me why I wanted to write about her. I said I didn't really know—I imagined her as sensitive and intelligent, and up against it. Having a hard life but making something of it, too. In such a case I often make a note. But I didn't—and I forgot the whole episode. Then, about three weeks later, in San Francisco, I woke up one night at four— I am not so much a bad sleeper as a short sleeper—I woke up, I say, with a story in my head. I sketched the story at once—it was about an English girl in England—a purely English tale. Next day an appointment fell through and I had a whole day on my hands. I found my notes and wrote the story—that is, the chief scenes and some connecting tissue. Some days later, in a plane— ideal for writing—I began to work it over, clean it up, and I thought, why all these wrinkles, that's the third time they come in. And I suddenly realised that my English heroine was the girl on the Manhattan boat. Somehow she had gone down into my sub-conscious, and came up again with a full-sized story. And I imagine that has happened before. I notice some person because he or she exemplifies some part of my feeling about things. The Manhattan girl was a motive. And she brought up a little piece of counterpoint. But the wrinkles were the first crude impression—a note, but one that counted too much in the final writing.

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INTERVIEWERS

A note...

CARY

I was thinking in terms of music. My short stories are written with the same kind of economy—and no one would publish them. Some of them, now being published, are twenty years old. Because each note has to count and it must not be superfluous. A son of mine, a composer, wrote some music for the B. B. C. lately. The orchestra was small, and the Musicians' Union wouldn't let him conduct. He heard one of the players ask the conductor what the stuff was like. The conductor, no doubt intending to warn the player, answered, "It's good, but the trouble is that every note counts." I suppose the editors who rejected me felt like that. They wanted a little more fluff.

INTERVIEWERS

You can depend around here on practically everyone having read *The Horse's Mouth.* Do you think that's because it's less philosophical? Or just because it's a Penguin?

CARY

The Horse's Mouth is a very heavy piece of metapyhsical writing. No, they like it because it's funny. The French have detected the metaphysics and are fussing about the title. I want *Le Tuyau Increvable*—the unbustable lip. They say this is unworthy of a philosophical work and too like a 'roman policier'. I say tant mieux. But they are unconvinced.

INTERVIEWERS

A metaphysical work...

CARY

A study of the creative imagination working in symbols. And symbols are highly uncertain—they also die.

INTERVIEWERS

Gully's picture on the wall then, which is demolished, is in its turn a symbol of the instability of the symbol?

CARY

That's what Mrs. Hardy seems to think. But that would

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be allegory. I hate allegory. The trouble is that if your books mean anything, the critic is apt to work allegory in. The last scene of Gully is a real conflict, not an allegorical one. And it was necessary to cap the development as with Gully's eye. It was the catastrophe in a Greek sense.

INTERVIEWERS

The Horse's Mouth was part of a trilogy. You're doing this again now aren't you, in *The Prisoner of Grace, Except the Lord* and the third yet to come?

CARY

I was dissatisfied with the first trilogy. I've set out this time with the intention of doing better. I think I am doing better. The contrasts between the different worlds are much sharper. When I'd finished *The Prisoner of Grace* I planned a second book on political religion, but contemporary religion. And I found myself bored with the prospect. I nearly threw in the whole plan. Then one of my children urged me to go on. And I had the idea of writing Nimmo's religion as a young man. This appeared to me as opening a new world of explanation, and also giving a strong contrast to the last book. So I got to work. And tried to get at the roots of left-wing English politics in evangelical religion.

INTERVIEWERS

And the third?

CARY

It's going to be called *Not Honour More.* In it, I deal with Jim—the lover in *The Prisoner of Grace.* He is the man of honour, of duty, of service, reacting family against the politician. But I'll show it to you in its present state. Upstairs.

We followed Mr. Cary upstairs two storeys to his workshop. It was a room with a low ceiling. A window at the far end looked out onto trees. Where the walls downstairs had been covered with pictures, up here it was all bookcases, containing, it seemed, more files than books. Mr. Cary went straight to his desk, pulling out sheaves of paper from the shelves over it. They were, one instantly observed, meticulously

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organized. The sheaves were numbered and titled, each chapter in its own envelope. Mr. Cary explained that these were the 'big scenes'. Clipped on the front of each envelope was a sheet of memoranda indicating what still remained to be done within the chapter, what would be required to give the finished scene a more convincing build-up. These were the chapters of the embryonic *Not Honour More.*

Mr. Cary explained that he was now 'plotting' the book. There was research yet to be done. Research, he explained, was sometimes a bore; but it was necessary for getting the political and social background of his work right. He had a secretary who did useful work for him in the Bodleian, the University library. He was at the moment, for example, wanting facts on the General Strike, and had given his secretary a list of questions to work on.

We asked him if what we had heard was true—that often while working his writing would generate another unrelated idea and he would thus be led to write out a block of about 20,000 words before returning to the work at hand. Mr. Cary confirmed this account; and it was confirmed too by the large bookcase containing nothing but files and boxes of unfinished work. It was an impressive proliferation of novels and short stories, with the titles on the spines, unfamiliar titles like *The Facts of Life.* One file contained 'recent short stories'.

The overall impression of the room in which he worked, as of the novelist himself, was of a man who, much as he himself might eschew the word, radiated 'vitality'. He rose, he said, early, and was always at his desk by nine. We had ourselves already more than the period of time he had agreed to give us. As we went downstairs and made again for the sitting room, he looked anxiously at his watch; but we were there only to dig quickly among the deep cushions for the belongings that had spilled from our pockets as we lounged.

—John Burrows
Alex Hamilton

(This is the seventh in a series of interviews on The Art of fiction. Authors interviewed have included E. M. Forster, François Mauriac, Graham Greene, Irwin Shaw, William Styron, and Alberto Moravia.)

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RECORDERS IN ITALY

It was amusing on that antique grass,
Seated halfway between the green and blue,
To waken music gentle and extinct.

Under the old walls where the daisies grew
Sprinkled in cinquecento style, as though
Archangels might have stepped there yesterday.

But it was we, mortal and young, who strolled
And fluted quavering music, for a day
Casual heirs of all we looked upon.

Such pipers of the emerald afternoon
Could only be the heirs of perfect time
When every leaf distinctly brushed with gold

Listened to Primavera speaking flowers.
Those scherzos stumble now; our journeys run
To harsher hillsides, rockier declensions.

Obligatory climates call us home.
And so shall clarity of cypresses,
Unfingered by necessity, become

Merely the ghost of half-remembered trees,
A trick of sunlight flattering the mind?—
There were four recorders sweet upon the wind.

—Adrienne Cecile Rich

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EVAN S. CONNELL JR.

THE FISHERMAN FROM CHIHUAHUA

SANTA Cruz is at the top of Monterey Bay which is about 100 miles below San Francisco, and in the winter there are not many people in Santa Cruz. The boardwalk concessions are shuttered except for one counter-and-booth restaurant, the ferris wheel seats are hooded with olive green canvas and the powerhouse padlocked, and the rococo doors of the carousel are boarded over and if one peers through a knothole into its gloom the horses which buck and plunge through summer prosperity seem like animals touched by a magic wand that they may never move again. Dust dims the gilt of their saddles and sifts through cracks into their bold nostrils. About the only sounds to be heard around the waterfront in Santa Cruz during winter are the voices of Italian fishermen hidden by mist as they work against the long pier, and the slap of waves against the pilings of the cement dance pavillon when tide runs high, or the squeak of a gull, or once in a long time bootsteps on the slippery boards as some person comes quite alone and usually slowly to the edge of the grey and fogbound ocean.

The restaurant is Pendleton's and white brush strokes on the glass announce *tacos, frijoles* and *enchiladas* as house specialties, these being mostly greens and beans and fried meat made arrogant with pepper. Smaller letters in pseudo-Gothic script say: *Se Habla Espanol* but this is not true; it was the man who owned the place before Pendleton who could speak Spanish. From him, though, Pendleton did learn how to make the food and this is the reason a short fat Mexican who worked as a mechanic at Ace Dillon's Texaco station continued eating his suppers there. He came in every night just after eight o'clock and sat at the counter, ate an astound-

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ing amount of this food which he first splattered with tabasco sauce as casually as though it were ketchup and then washed farther down with beer. After that he would feel a little drunk and would spend as much as two or even three dollars playing the pinball machine and the great nickelodeon and dancing by himself, but inoffensively, contentedly, just snapping his fingers and shuffling across the warped boards often until Pendleton began pulling in the shutters. Then having had a suitable evening he would half-dance his way home, or at least back in the direction of town. He was a squat little man who waddled like a duck full of eggs and he had a face like a blunt arrowhead or a Toltec idol, and he was about the color of hot sand. His fingers were much too thick for their length, seemingly without joints, only creases where it was necessary for them to bend. He smelled principally of cold grease and of urine as though his pants needed some air, but Pendleton who did not smell very good himself did not mind and besides there were not many customers during these winter months.

So every evening shortly after dark he entered for his food and some amusement, and as he appeared to contain all God's world within his own self Pendleton was not disinterested when another Mexican came in directly behind him like a long shadow. This new man was tall, very tall, possibly six feet or more, and much darker, almost black in the manner of a sweat stained saddle. He was handsome, silent, and perhaps forty years of age. Also he was something of a dandy: his trousers which were long and quite tight revealed the fact that he was bowlegged, as befits certain types of men, and made one think of him easily riding a large fast horse, not necessarily toward a woman but in the direction of something more remote and mysterious—bearing a significant message or something like that. Exceedingly short black boots of finest leather took in his narrow trouser bottoms. For a shirt he wore long-sleeved white silk unbuttoned to below the level of his nipples which, themselves, were vaguely visible. The hair of his chest was so luxuriant that an enameled crucifix there did not even rest on the skin.

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These two men sat at the counter side by side. The tall one lifted off his sombrero as if afraid of mussing his hair and he placed it on the third stool. His hair was deeply oiled and comb tracks went all the way from his temples to the back of his thin black neck, and he scented of a kind of green perfume. He had a mustache that consisted of nothing but two black strings hanging across the corners of his unforgiving mouth and ending in soft points about an inch below his chin. He seemed to think himself alone in the restaurant because, after slowly licking his lips and interlacing his fingers, he just sat looking somberly ahead. The small man ordered for them both.

After they had eaten supper the little one played the pinball machine while this strange man took from his shirt pocket a cigarillo only a little bigger than his mustache and smoked it with care, that is, he would take it from his mouth between his thumb and one finger as if he were afraid of crushing it, and after releasing the smoke he would replace it with the same care in the exact center of his mouth. It never dangled or rolled, he respected it. Nor was it a cheap piece of tobacco, its smoke ascended heavily, moist and sweet.

Suddenly the fat Mexican kicked the pinball game and with a surly expression walked over to drop a coin into the nickelodeon. The tall man had remained all this time at the counter with his long savage eyes half-shut, smoking and smoking the fragrant cigarillo. Now he did not turn around, in fact his single movement was to remove the stump from his lips, but clearly he was disturbed. When the music ended he sat totally motionless for several minutes. Then his head began to sink and was almost touching the counter before its direction reversed, and when his face was against the ceiling his throat began to swell like that of a mating pigeon.

Pendleton, sponging an ash tray, staggered as if a knife had plunged through his ribs.

The Mexican's eyes were squeezed altogether shut. His lips had peeled back from his teeth like those of a jaguar tearing meat and the veins of his neck looked ready to burst. In the shrill screams was a memory of Moors, the ching of Arab

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cymbals, of rags and of running feet through all the market-places of the East.

His song had no beginning; it had no end. All at once he was simply sitting on the stool looking miserably ahead.

After a while the small fat Mexican said to Pendleton "Be seeing you, man," and waddled through the door into darkness. A few seconds later the tall one's stool creaked. Without a sound he placed the high steepled sombrero like a crown on his hair and followed his friend through the door.

The next night there happened to be a pair of tourists eating in the back booth when the men entered They were dressed as before except that the big one's shirt was lime green in color and Pendleton noticed his wrist watch, fastened not to his wrist actually but over the green cuff where it bulged like an oily bubble. They took the same stools and ate fried beans, tacos and enchiladas for almost an hour after which the short one who looked like his Toltec ancestors gently belched, smiled in a benign way and moved over to his machine. Failing to win anything he cursed it and kicked it before selecting his favorite records.

This time Pendleton was alert: as the music ended he got ready for the first shriek. The tourists, caught unaware, thought their time had come. When they recovered from the shock they looked fearfully over the top of the booth and then the woman stood up in order to see better. After the black Mexican's song was finished they all could hear the incoming tide, washing softly around the pillars of the pavilion.

Presently the two paid their bill and went out, the short one leading, into the dirty yellow fog and the diving, squeaking gulls.

"Why that's terrible," the woman laughed. "It wasn't musical." Anyone who looked at her would know she was still shuddering from the force of the ominous man.

Her husband too was frightened and laughed, "Somebody should play a little drum behind that fellow." Unaware of what a peculiar statement he had made he formed a circle of his thumb and forefinger to show how big the drum should be.

She was watching the door, trying to frown compassionately.

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"I wonder what's the matter with that poor man. Some woman must have hurt him dreadfully."

Pendleton began to wipe beer bracelets and splats of tabasco sauce from the lacquered plywood counter where the men had been. The restaurant seemed too quiet.

The woman remarked cheerily, "We're from Iowa City."

Pendleton tried to think of something but he had never been to Iowa City or anywhere near it even on a train, so he asked if they would like more coffee.

The husband wondered, "Those two fellows, do they come in here every night?"

Pendleton was seized with contempt and hatred for this domestic little man, though he did not know why, and walked stiffly away from their booth without answering. He stood with both hairy hands on the shining urn while he listened to the sea threshing and rolling under the night.

"Who?" he said gruffly. "Them two?"

A few minutes later while pouring coffee he said, "Sometimes I feel so miserable I could damn near roll up in a tube."

The couple, overpowered by his manner, looked up uneasily. The woman ventured: "It seems terribly lonely around."

On the third evening as they seated themselves before the counter Pendleton said to the one who spoke American, "Tell your friend he can't yowl in here anymore."

"He's not my baby," this short fat man replied, not greatly interested. "Six tacos and four beers and a lot of beans."

"What do you think, I'm running a damn concert hall?"

For a moment the little Mexican became eloquent with his eyebrows, then both he and Pendleton turned their attention to the silent one who was staring somberly past the case of pies.

Pendleton leaned on his hands so that his shoulders budged. "Now looky, Pablo, give him the word and do it quick. Tell him to cut that noise out. You understand me?"

This enraged the small man whose voice rose to a snarl. "Pablo yourself. Don't give me that stuff."

Pendleton was not angry but set about cleaving greens for their tacos as though he were furious. While the blade

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chunked into the wood again and again beside his thumb he thought about the situation. He did not have anything particular in mind when all at once he banged down the cleaver and with teeth clenched began bending his eyes toward the two.

"*No debe cantar,*" the little one said hurriedly, waggling a negative finger at his companion. No more singing. "*No mas.*"

"That's better, by God," muttered Pendleton as though he understood. He wished to say something in Spanish about the matter but he knew only *manana, adios* and *señorita* and none of these seemed to fit. He resumed work, but doubtfully, not certain if the silent one had heard either of them. Over one shoulder he justified himself: "Folks come here to eat their suppers, not to hear any concert."

Abel W. Sharpe who had once been the sheriff of Coda City and who now ripped tickets for a movie house on Pacific came in the door alone but arguing harshly. The Toltec had started playing pinball so Sharpe took the vacant stool, looked up twice at the man beside him, and then dourly ordered waffles and hot milk. It was while he was pouring syrup into the milk that the nickelodeon music died and that the black Mexican did it again.

Pendleton was exasperated with himself for laughing and almost choked by trying to stop.

"Heh?" asked the old man, who at the first note had jumped off his stool and now crouched several feet away from the counter, a knife in one hand and his mug of sweet milk in the other. "I can't hear nothing. The bastard's deefened me."

The Toltec had not stopped playing pinball and paid none of them the least attention because he had lighted four pretty girls which meant he would probably win something. His friend now sat motionless on the stool and looked ahead as though he saw clear into some grief stricken time.

Not until the 8th or maybe the 9th night did Pendleton realize that the restaurant was drawing more people; there would be six or eight or even as many as a dozen in for dinner.

There came a night when the fat Toltec entered as always

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but no one followed. That night the restaurant was an uneasy place. Things spilled, and while cleaning up one of the tables Pendleton discovered a menu burned through and through with cigarette holes. By 10:30 the place was deserted.

Pendleton said, "Hey, Pablo."

The Toltec gave him a furious look.

"All right," Pendleton apologized, "what's your name?"

"What's yours?" he replied. He was deeply insulted.

"Whereabouts is your friend?"

"He's no friend of mine."

Pendleton walked down the counter behind a damp rag, wrung it over the sink, then very casually he did something he never did or never even thought of doing: he opened a bottle of beer for the Mexican and indicated without a word that it was free.

Toltec, though still grieved, accepted the gift, saying, "I just met the guy. He asked me where to get some decent cooking."

Pendleton wiped a table and for a time appeared to be idly picking his back teeth. When he judged the interval to be correct he asked, "Got tired of the grub here, I guess."

"No, tonight he's just drunk."

Pendleton allowed several more minutes, then, "He looks like a picture of a bullfighter I saw once in Tijuana called Victoriano Posada."

And this proved to be a shrewd inquiry because after drinking some more of the free beer the fat Mexican remarked, "He calls himself Damaso."

Pendleton, wondering if something else might follow, pretended to stretch and to yawn and smacked his chops mightily. He thought that tomorrow he would say, when the tall one entered, "Howdy, Damaso."

"Know what? He goes and stands by himself on the sea wall a lot of times. Maybe he's going to knock himself off. Wouldn't that be something?"

"Tell him not to do it in front of my place," Pendleton answered.

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Through the screen door could be seen a roll of silvery yellow fog and above it the moon, but the water was hidden.

"These Santa Cruz winters," Pendleton said. Opening the icebox he selected a superior beer for himself and moved his high stool far enough away that his guest might not feel their friendship was being forced. Peeling off the wet label he rolled it into a soggy grey ball which he dropped into a bucket under the counter. "Singers make plenty money, I hear."

The Mexican looked at him slyly. "What are you talking about?"

Pendleton, scratching his head, sighed and yawned again. "Huh? Oh. I was just thinking about what's-his-name. That fellow you come in here with once or twice."

"I know it," the Mexican said, laughing.

For a while both of them drank away at their beers and listened to the combers, each of which sounded as if it would smash the door.

"Feels like there's something standing up in the ocean tonight," Pendleton said. "I could use a little summer."

"You want our beach full of tourists? Those sausages? Man, you're crazy. You're off the rocks."

Pendleton judged that the Mexican was about to insult the summer people still more so he manipulated the conversation once again: "Somebody told me your friend got himself a singing job at that nightspot near Capitola."

"Look," said the Toltec, patient but irritated, "I just met the guy a couple of weeks ago."

"He never said where he's from, I guess."

"Chihuahua, he says. That's one rough town. And full of sand, Jesus Christ."

Breakers continued sounding just beyond the door and the fog now stood against the screen like a person.

"What does he do?"

The Mexican lifted both fat little shoulders.

"Just traveling through?"

The Mexican lifted both hands.

"Where is he going?"

"All I know is he's got a pretty good voice."

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"He howls like a god damn crazy wolf," Pendleton said, "howling for the moon."

"Yah, he's pretty good. Long time ago I saw a murder down south in the mountains and a woman screamed just like that."

Both of them thought about things and Pendleton, having reflected on the brevity of human affairs and the futility of riches, opened his icebox for two more drinks. The Mexican accepted one as though in payment for service. For some seconds they had been able to hear footsteps approaching, audible after every tunnel of water caved in. The footsteps went past the door but no one could be seen.

"Know what? There was an old man washed up on the beach the other day."

"That so?" said Pendleton. "Everything gets to the beach sooner or later."

The Mexican nodded. Somewhere far out on the bay a little boat sounded again and again. "What a night," he said.

Pendleton murmured and scratched.

"Know something, mister?"

Pendleton, now printing wet circles on his side of the counter, asked what that might be.

"Damaso is no Mexicano."

"I didn't think so," Pendleton lied.

"No, because he's got old blood. You know what I mean? I think he's a gypsy from Spain, or wherever those guys come from. He's dark in the wrong way He just don't *feel* Mexicano to me. There's something about him, and besides he speaks a little Castellano."

Both of them considered all this.

"I suppose he's howling about some girl."

"No, it's bigger than that."

"What's the sound say?"

But here the little Mexican lost interest; he revolved on the stool, from which only his toes could reach to the floor, hopped off and hurried across to the nickelodeon. Having pushed a nickel through the slit he studied the wonderful colors and followed the bubbles which fluttered up the tubes to vanish,

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next he dialed *The Great Speckled Bird* and began shuffling around the floor snapping his fingers and undulating so that in certain positions he looked about five months pregnant.

"Who knows?" he asked of no one in particular while he danced.

The next night also he entered alone. When Pendleton mentioned this he replied the dark one was still drunk.

And the next night when asked if the drunk were going into its third day he replied that Damaso was no longer drunk, just sick from being so, that he was at present lying on the wet cement having vomited on his boots, that probably by sunrise he would be all right. This turned out to be correct because both of them came in for supper the following night. Toltec, smiling and tugging at his crotch, was rumpled as usual and smelled human while his tall companion was oiled and groomed and wearing the white silk again. A good many people were loitering about the restaurant—every booth was full—because this thing had come to be expected, and though all of them were eating or drinking or spending money in some way to justify themselves, and although no one looked up at the entrance of the two Mexicans there could be no doubt about the situation. Only these two men seemed not to notice anything; they ate voraciously and drank a lot of beer after which the one went across to his game, which had been deliberately vacated, and Damaso remained on the stool with his long arms crossed on the counter.

Later the nickelodeon lighted up. When at last its music died and the table stopped there was not a sound in all the restaurant. People watched the head of the dark man bow until down it was hidden in his arms. The crucifix disentangled itself and dropped out the top of his gaucho shirt where it began to swing to and fro, glittering as it twisted on the end of its golden chain. He remained like that for almost an hour, finally raised his head to look at the ticket, counted away enough money, and with the sombrero loosely in one hand he stumbled out the door.

The other Mexican paid no attention; he called for more beer which he drank all at once in an attempt to interest a

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young girl with silver slippers and breasts like pears who was eating supper with her parents, but failing to win anything at this or again at the machine he suddenly grew bored of the evening and walked out.

The next night he entered alone. When asked if his companion had started another drunk he said that Damaso was gone.

Pendleton asked late in the evening, "How do you know?"

"I feel it," he said.

Big Pendleton then stood listening to the advancing tide which had begun to pat the pillars like someone gently slapping a dead drum. Taking off his apron he rolled it tight as he always did and put it beneath the counter. With slow fingers he untied the sweaty handkerchief from around his neck and folded it over the apron, but there his routine altered; before pulling in shutters he stood a while beside the screen and looked out and listened but of course received no more than he expected which was fog, the sound of the sea, and its odor.

Sharply the Toltec said, "I like to dance." And he began to do so. "Next summer I'm really going to cut it up. Nothing's going to catch me." He read Pendleton's face while dancing by himself to the odd and clumsy little step he was inventing, and counseled, "Jesus Christ, he's gone. Forget about it, man."

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CATHARSIS

It is the tenderness you feel you know
You may have had the tenderness you miss.

Still in the mask you wear your tongue can go
Raptly to themes the audience won't guess

Creating from those fragments of thin air
Within the head's O what you might have been.

You are not less because they cannot share
All that you are and tell what they have seen.

Still they're agog. Your eloquence will flow
Beyond the measure pacing your distress

Till it breaks down the limits of your care
And finally you relish what you seem

And are to your last sense all you forgo.
Love. The particular. No more no less.

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THE VIGIL

"*The spider love, which transubstantiates all.*"—*Donne.*

You stand in the first dumbness of the snow
As finely, the gauze drop in pantomime,
All detail fades upon your startled face
And back to darkness line and colour flow.

The paralytic rapture of the bone
Has come; what rain on stone and age in us
Raddle the snow dispenses equally—
Years towards death in one short afternoon.

The mouth lifts at one corner, on the crown
Regally twists the hair against the white
Stark imposition of a nervous fit,
Aging in frozen tumult like a clown.

You mime stock-still your final comic pose:
Seduced by the earthy Widower of Spades
Slowly to dissolution and the blank
Tumbler's lust for stature and repose.

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AFTERNOONS ON A LONG STAIRCASE

IT had started to rain outside. The water was sliding like lace curtains, one over the other, down his window as if to stop him from seeing out. But each curtain only blurred the long driveway and the three cars that were parked in front kept running all together like his watercolors on folded paper. Then the water would slide down and the driveway would uncurl and the cars would fold up and separate again until the next drop splashed and the next curtain fell.

He could name the three cars by looking at the silver statues that stood on the front of each of them. He knew the one with the silver ring and the silver marble inside it was a Buick. That was Mrs. Chandler's car. His mother called Mrs. Chandler Catherine most of the time and Mrs. Chandler called his mother Vi most of the time. His mother's name was really Violet, but no one called her Violet. They just called her Vi. Of course when he answered the phone and they wanted to speak to his mother they would say, "Oh, hello, Alvy, is your mother there? Will you be a Sweetheart and tell her Mrs. Mallory or Mrs. Du Bois or Mrs. Chandler is on the phone?" He was always a Sweetheart and he would tell his mother. She usually was glad they called, but sometimes he felt sorry he told her because she would frown and say, "What does *she* want?" or "She *would* have to call now."

Once when she was sitting on the sun-porch having what she called her "afternoon cigarette", Mrs. Chandler had called. She asked him to be a Darling and tell his mother Mrs. Chandler was on the phone. He told his mother and she seemed very tired and she asked him, "Why didn't you tell her I

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wasn't here or something?" He told his mother he was sorry. He ran back to the phone. Mrs. Chandler was humming like she always did while she waited on the phone. Mrs. Chandler's humming wasn't really very pretty. It was too fast and jerky. He could almost see Mrs. Chandler's fingers go rummp-rummp on a table-top while she hummed. Once in a while she would cough right in the middle of her humming too.

"Mrs. Chandler, my mother isn't here."

Mrs. Chandler had stopped humming. She didn't answer right away. "Oh—Where did she go, Dear?"

He said he didn't know for sure, but she probably went shopping or something.

"But, Dear, she was going to wait and drive into the city with me Friday."

He said, "Oh, well, maybe she was gone someplace else then." Mrs. Chandler said she guessed so too and added that his mother should call her back when she found it convenient. When she said that she sounded like her humming. Like she was pretending to make music, but didn't really like to.

He said, "All right", and hung up.

"Alvy," his mother called, "I thought you said Mrs. Chandler was on the phone."

He was halfway up the stairway and he was counting the steps again. Of course he had told his mother Mrs. Chandler was on the phone. Didn't she remember?

"Yes, mother, she was on the phone, but I told her you weren't here."

"You told her what?" his mother called.

"I told her you weren't here." He guessed his mother couldn't hear him very well.

"Will you come down here this very instant and tell me what you told Mrs. Chandler."

Even his mother sounded like Mrs. Chandler's humming. She sounded mad. He counted the steps down too. 9—10—11.

This time the eleventh step was the long, square one at the

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bottom and just before the eleventh step looked like a piece of pie up around the bend, halfway to the top—

"Alvy, what did you tell Mrs. Chandler just now?"

His mother hadn't heard him. "I told her you were out shopping or somewhere."

"Shopping? Good lord, Alvy, why did you tell her that?"

"What should I have told her?" he asked.

"What—What should you have told—You should have told me."

He guessed his mother didn't remember. "I did tell you, mother."

"I know you did, Alvy—but why in the world did you come back and lie to Mrs. Chandler about my not being here and then hang up on her?"

He was a little surprised at his mother not even remembering that and she was sounding more like Mrs. Chandler's humming all the time.

"But, mother, you told me to tell her you weren't here."

"I told you what?"

His mother really had forgotten and she seemed to want to rummp her fingers on a table-top. They were going rummp-rummp on her shirt, but you couldn't hear them. 1234—1234—1234.

"Now listen, Alvy, I don't know what has gotten into you, but I want you to call Mrs. Chandler *right now* and tell her that you are *sorry* but you *didn't know* that your mother was here and that I'll speak to her *now*. Then you come and tell me and I'll talk to her."

This was a funny sort of game, but it was going to be fun.

He hadn't ever done this before and his mother didn't ever play games with him. He waited for her to go back to the sun-porch.

"*I said, call Mrs. Chandler back, right now.* Her number is on the memo."

"Aren't you going back to the sun-porch, Mother?"

"Sun-porch? What for?"

"So I can come and get you when I tell Mrs. Chandler that I'll come and get you."

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"Alvy, will you call Mrs. Chandler right now or are you going to have to be slapped!"

His mother probably needed an aspirin because she always got mad when she had a headache. He guessed they weren't going to play the game after all.

He pushed the little gold pointer on the memo all the way from F to Z. Clack-clack-clack. The little, brown, plastic grooves made that noise. Clack-clack-clack.

"Alvy, will you hurry up and make that call!"

Clack-clack-clack down to C and he pushed the button. The top flew up and the yellow paper with a big C at the top of it and with lines all over it lay there. Mrs. Chandler was on the third line. He read line one.

Canin, Hazel .. 17670.

Carley, Bob & Marge... 72425.

"Alvy, I'm giving you just one more minute."

He knew his mother's fingers were going rummp-rummp again so he didn't look.

Chandler, Catherine... 77752.

He put his finger on the number and kept saying it. 77752—77752. His mother was going rummp-rummp. The receiver was humming in his ear, but not like Mrs. Chandler's humming.

It was all the same. It wasn't in a hurry. It sounded as if it were tired and didn't care and never coughed until you dialled. 7—it coughed then—7—it coughed some more—8—again—2. It was quiet for a moment. Buzz—only it wasn't like Buzz at all. It was more like a hiccup.

"Hello?"

"Hello?"

Mrs. Chandler wasn't humming, but she was singing now.

"Hello, Mrs. Chandler?"

"Yes?"

"This is Alvy and my mother wants to talk to you."

His mother's fingers went rummp on his shoulder.

"I mean I forgot she was at home and now I'll get her and she will talk to you."

"Did she just get back, Dear?"

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"No—I mean she just got back before I knew it and I'll get her now."

His mother took the receiver away from him. "Hello?—Oh, it's you, Catherine. I wondered who Alvy was talking to— What—Why—Why I don't know. I just came in a few moments ago—Oh, just down to the florist's. I wanted some mums for—"

His mother certainly was getting all mixed up. She couldn't forget who he was talking to when she told him to call Mrs. Chandler herself. He started up the stairs. 1—2—3—4—5—

"Oh, and Catherine, drop on over Thursday afternoon for bridge—Oh, no, nothing, just you and I and Florence and Rita. Anytime between one-thirty and two o'clock." 6—7—8—9—10—

"Alvy! You haven't heard the last of this yet!"

He hoped they didn't do it again because it wasn't very much fun and his mother was all mixed up—

"Alvy, do you hear?"

"Yes, mother."

"All right then."

10—11—12—13—14—

The curtains of water kept blurring the cars all together and the driveway was curling and uncurling with every drop.

The Mercury convertible had a design on its nose too. It wasn't really a statue. Just kind of a silver torpedo with long, folded wings on it. That was Mrs. Du Bois' car. Mrs. Du Bois was the prettiest woman he had ever seen. Except, of course, his mother. Mrs. Du Bois had real dark, black hair and her eyelids were purple. She was always smiling too. He had cut out a picture from a magazine that looked like Mrs. Du Bois, but his mother thought it was funny and that it didn't look like Mrs. Du Bois at all. He kept the picture though.

Mrs. Du Bois' car was a yellow color and it kept getting mixed up with the red Pontiac next to it. He could tell the Pontiac easily because it had an Indian on the front. It was

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Mrs. Mallory's car. He didn't like Mrs. Mallory because of what she had said. His mother was all mixed up too because of what Mrs. Mallory said. That's why she had slapped him and sent him up to his room.

The cars got all crunched up again and the driveway curled up again. Uncurled.

The three cars had come up the long driveway before it had started to rain.

His mother had let him fill the candy dish with the mixed nuts. He liked the cashews best because they looked like moons. The others looked like bugs. His mother told him he could fill the candy dish if he promised not to pester during her party. He promised.

At one-thirty his mother told him to go upstairs and color. He picked six cashews out of the candy dish and ate one every three steps as he climbed. He finished the last one at the top.

When he colored he always made the faces red. He wished everyone's face was red. His mother's cheeks were red and Mrs. Du Bois had red lips. All the ladies had red lips and red cheeks, but no one's face was red all over. He liked red.

The window didn't have the water curtains falling over it when the cars came. Mrs. Mallory's red Pontiac came first. He liked the red, but he didn't like Mrs. Mallory's car. But he liked the Indian that was on it. Mrs. Du Bois' yellow Mercury was right behind Mrs. Mallory's car. They both stopped beside each other. Mrs. Du Bois was laughing and Mrs. Mallory was smiling. Then Mrs. Chandler's Buick came down the driveway honking at Mrs. Du Bois and Mrs. Mallory. Everyone was laughing. Mrs. Du Bois made a funny face and ran out of the way. So did Mrs. Mallory except she ran the other way. Mrs. Chandler stopped her Buick beside the other cars and she was laughing too. They were playing a game. He hadn't seen them play games like that before. Only cards. He wished he could play games with them. They were inside and they were still laughing. Sometimes it sounded as if they were crying, but they were laughing.

They always put their coats on his mother's bed because

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they all put lipstick on by his mother's mirror. They never left their coats in the closet downstairs. Mrs. Du Bois' lips had looked red from his window. He wondered if she would put some more on. He closed his door when he heard them come up the stairs. He knew they didn't count the steps because sometimes it seemed they were at the top and then when he expected to hear their voices in the hall they were still at the bottom. Maybe this was another game his mother and these ladies played. Maybe they walked up and then back down the stairs before they came up. He wished he could play with them. They could count the steps. They were laughing in the hall now.

"Those stairs, Vi! When are you going to put an escalator in?" "Or an elevator?"

His mother said something. He could hear them laugh. This time they didn't laugh hard. Only quiet.

He didn't know his mother was going to put an elevator in the house. He hoped she wouldn't put an elevator in the house. If she did put an elevator in the house nobody would walk up the stairs. Nobody except him. He would walk up the stairs and he would count. But would his mother let him walk up the stairs? Maybe she would tear down the stairs for the elevator. He didn't think she would. But where would she put the elevator unless she did tear down the stairs? He didn't want her to tear down the stairs.

"Mother?"

He opened his door. He could hear the ladies' voices down the wallpaper hall. They were in his mother's room. Maybe they were putting on lipstick in front of his mother's mirror. "Mother?"

He could hear Mrs. Du Bois. She was talking soft. It sounded almost like humming. Real humming. Mrs. Du Bois always sounded nice. Not like Mrs. Chandler's humming.

"Mother?"

He walked down the hall a little way. He slid his hand along the wallpaper. He always forgot. His mother didn't like him to slide his hand over the wallpaper. He liked to

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though. It felt funny rubbing against all those flowers and leaves and not feeling anything. He coudn't hear his mother.

Maybe she was downstairs. He could hear Mrs. Mallory talking.

He was just outside his mother's room and Mrs. Mallory was talking very low. It wasn't like humming though. It was like the radiator in his room that went hiss. Only it wasn't like hiss at all. It was more like the teakettle on the stove just before it whistled.

"I shouldn't have come today. You know as well as I do that Vi *can't play bridge.* I don't know why she must play bridge when she's so poor at it. She isn't too cooperative at taking suggestions either. Oh well, I'm here."

But he knew his mother could play bridge. He watched her play. She held her cards in a fan and she would choose one and pick it out and lay it in the center of the table.

She *could* play bridge. Mrs. Mallory was a liar. His mother *could* play bridge. He tried to take hold of the lavender vine on the wallpaper, but he couldn't. His hand kept slipping off and sliding down. He ran back to his room and closed his door. It was dark. He could see the window and it was all purply-gray. Then the lightning came and he thought he saw everything in his room. He couldn't remember them all. He wondered if his red China dog was on the bureau. He watched the top of the bureau. Flash. Yes, it was there.

He felt his red crayon snap under his foot. He bent down and picked it up. The rain started breaking on his window. Breaking and sliding down. He pushed the red crayon into the color-book face and rubbed hard. The crayon snapped again. The face looked like it had a bloody nose.

He opened his door again and watched the lightning glow on the wallpaper in the hall. It was trying to take hold, but it kept sliding off too. He started down the stairs. 1—2—3. They were dark now, but he could see light coming up from around the bend. It was orange. 4—5—6—7—8—9. It wasn't like orange at all. He stood right in where he saw it

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and it wasn't orange. He could see the bannister easily though and below it was light. 12—13—14. He could hear the ladies now. His mother would have the lights on because it was dark out. The lampshades were a different color when the lamps were lighted. He liked them better when they were lighted. 15—16—17—18. The entrance-hall was always empty except when someone stepped inside the door. He didn't like the entrance-hall.

The ladies were sitting at the yellow cardtable. Mrs. Du Bois had burned the top of the yellow cardtable once with her cigarette. She had said she was sorry, but his mother told her it was nothing and it didn't matter at all. He remembered seeing his mother rub the hole with her finger later and she looked as if she was sorry too.

The lamps were lighted. The lampshades had all changed color. His mother was having her afternoon cigarette. He watched the smoke steam up and curl under the lampshade. Mrs. Du Bois and Mrs. Chandler were having a cigarette too and their smoke got mixed up with his mother's under the lampshade.

"Oh, hello, Alvy."

Mrs. Du Bois was looking at him. They were all looking at him. They had their cards in their hands like fans. He wished he could hold cards in his hands like a fan. He went over to the table. He liked Mrs. Du Bois.

"Hello, Mrs. Du Bois."

"Aren't you going to say Hello to everybody, Alvy?"

His mother always said that.

"Hello, Mrs. Chandler."

He looked at the candy dish on the table with the mixed nuts.

"Hello, Mrs. Mallory."

"What do you bid?"

He looked up. Mrs. Chandler meant his mother. His mother was frowning at her fan. She puffed her cigarette. Only it wasn't like a puff at all. It was more like she kissed her cigarette and then blew the kiss away. When she blew

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it away the smoke would fly up, slow down and crawl under the lampshade.

"No trump."

He saw a cashew in the candy dish. Mrs. Du Bois reached in.

The cashew was still there only in a different place. He liked Mrs. Du Bois, but he didn't want her to get the cashew.

He picked it up.

"Did you color all your pictures?"

"No."

His mother was looking at her fan again.

"Why don't you go upstairs and color a little while longer, Sweet?"

She never called him Sweet. She called him Darling or Alvy dear. He didn't like Sweet.

"I colored all their faces red."

"I pass—Why red, Alvy?" Mrs. Du Bois was smiling at him.

He liked Mrs. Du Bois.

"Because I like red."

"Do you like everything red?"

He was still holding the cashew in his hand. It felt greasy.

"I like everything red except Mrs. Mallory's car."

Mrs. Mallory looked up at him over her fan. He felt the cashew snap in his hand.

"Why don't you like Mrs. Mallory's car?" Mrs. Du Bois wanted to know, but she should know why he didn't like Mrs. Mallory's car.

"Because I don't like Mrs. Mallory either. I like the Indian on the car, but I don't like the car and I don't like Mrs. Mallory." He kept looking at Mrs. Du Bois' purple eyelids. He was afraid to look at Mrs. Mallory. He could hear Mrs. Chandler's fingers begin to go rummp-rummp on the tabletop.

He thought he could hear her humming too, fast and jerky, but quiet now.

"Alvy, I'm ashamed of you being so rude to Mrs. Mallory. You know perfectly well you don't dislike her. Now apologize to Mrs. Mallory and then go upstairs until I say

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you can come down." His mother had blown away her cigarette and it lay like a tiny accordion in the ash-tray. Her fan was all broken and lying on the table. Her hands were still, but her eyes were going rummp-rummp like Mrs. Chandler's fingers. She was mad.

He watched the table-top while Mrs. Chandler's fingers went over it. 1234-1234. Mrs. Du Bois' hands were still holding her fan. She reached up and slid her bracelet back. It was a big silver bracelet with little pictures all over it. He wanted to ask Mrs. Du Bois if he could see the pictures, but he didn't dare. His mother was mad.

The candy dish looked all caved in now. When he had filled it the nuts had piled up like a mountain. It was all caved in now and he could see only one cashew left. It was lying between two pecans—

"Alvy, apologize to Mrs. Mallory and go upstairs!"

His mother was picking up her cards. She thumped them on the table in the middle of Mrs. Chandler's rummp-rummp.

"Now, Vi, Alvy didn't mean what he said. He's just fooling his Aunt Florence, aren't you, Alvy?" Mrs. Mallory was smiling at him from under the smoke-filled lampshade. He knew she was smiling at him because her red lips were like a moon and he could see her teeth. Mrs. Mallory had a piece of gold in her teeth. He had watched it shine when she talked. It didn't shine now. Mrs. Mallory was smiling at him, but her eyes weren't doing anything. Just looking at him. He didn't like Mrs. Mallory and he guessed Mrs. Mallory was mad at him too.

"Florence, don't be coy with him. I'm absolutely disgusted with his behavior today." His mother thumped her cards on the table and she was looking at him. "I insist that you apologize to Mrs. Mallory immediately *and then you go to your room and stay there until you hear from me.*" His mother was saying each word slowly like she was reading out of a book. He felt the pieces of cashew in his hand go snap again. He walked behind Mrs. Du Bois' chair and he ran his hand across the back of it. All he could hear was Mrs. Chandler's rummp-rummp. It seemed louder now. He

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walked behind Mrs. Chandler's chair too, but he didn't put his hand on it. He was standing by Mrs. Mallory now only he wasn't looking at her. He was looking at the candy dish. It was on the other side of the table now and he saw Mrs. Du Bois' hand go into it. The silver bracelet slid down her wrist and then slid back when she brought up her hand. He watched her lift the last cashew to her lips.

He knew they were all looking at him and he could feel the hot lampshade above. He watched Mrs. Mallory's earring shake on her ear. It was a blue marble on a string. It was shaking as if it wanted to get off.

"I *don't* like you, Mrs. Mallory."

The earring jerked. Mrs. Chandler's rummp-rummp was quiet now. He ran toward the entrance-hall. His mother caught him at the bottom of the stairs and all he could feel was her fingers in his arm. She was whispering like Mrs. Mallory had whispered and then he saw her hand come down against his face. She pushed him up the stairs. He forgot to count until he was halfway up.

The drops of water on his window were slower now. The driveway didn't curl up anymore while he looked at it. It broke up into little pieces, but it didn't curl up anymore.

The three cars were gone now. They had just gone and he could still see the streaks their wheels had made on the wet driveway. Their lights had been turned on because it was still dark and he remembered the red lights on the back getting smaller and smaller at the end of the driveway. And then there wasn't anything.

He heard his mother's footsteps on the stairs. He knew she would come up. She was going to ask him why he didn't like Mrs. Mallory. He didn't want to tell her because she might feel bad and she liked Mrs. Mallory. He wouldn't tell his mother what Mrs. Mallory said. His mother might cry.

The footsteps were closer now. He wondered what step she was on. Maybe she was on 12. It sounded like 12. 13—14—15—16—17—18.

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SIX NEW PICASSO DRAWINGS

from a collection of 180 *done at Vallauris*
from 28 *November* 1953 *to February* 1954

« Dernièrement a eu lieu ce qui pourrait bien être l'événement le plus prodigieux du siècle. Le 28 Novembre 1953, à l'âge de 72 ans, Pablo Picasso a ouvert son album d'esquisses et emporté par un élan frénétique pendant neuf semaines, a mis sur le papier les images qui fulguraient dans son cerveau. Ce recueil nous fait donc pénétrer dans l'esprit de l'artiste le plus doué de notre temps. »

—*Rebecca West.*

« L'œuvre qu'on fait est une façon de tenir son journal ».

—*Picasso.*

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CONGRESS BURNEY

THE last time I walked up Cow Horn Hollow, it was such a hot day in August that even under the thick, towering trees the atmosphere seemed to rise and settle again as disturbed as the air in front of a fire, and the jarflies were whirring so loud they sounded like a power line. I suppose it was too hot for anybody, even in the big valley, to pay much attention to the weeds that August, much less the people up Cow Horn; but you'd have thought they'd be scared of snakes, the treacherous bright copperheads, silent as Indian shoes, that could coil in the high weeds when the bare-footed children passed. The people up Cow Horn seemed too drowsy to be afraid; they just stretched like lazy snakes themselves across the old porch swings, or squatted Indian-style against the houses, deep in the heat, and didn't care.

People don't cling to places like Cow Horn Hollow. They get thrust into those steep cuts between the hills like leaves caught in a crack between the high stones of a wall, which may flutter and struggle a little in the fitful gusts of wind, but then, if they are caught too tight, seem to give up the fight and lie there until they turn to dust. At first look it's a beautiful place; one of those accidental penetrations into the virgin woods which are destroyed when the road is paved, or the level of the suburbs rises up into the cuts; for when money is spent to clear and plant tidy suburban gardens, the wild, threatening, delicate plants shrink back beyond reach. But as it is, the hollow is so erotic, you'd think, that it would put forth wolves of men and women so broad and tall they'd look like the pictures on travel posters. It isn't true. The life's too hard, the ground won't yield at such a deep grade, and the

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rains bring down what topsoil there is on the clearings every spring and deposit it in the swollen branch to ship by flood water down to the wide, fertile creek valley, owned by richer people.

So the men look more like hound-dogs, and the movement and color of the women makes them seem shrunk by the time they are thirty-five, just as their ancestors, the great pioneers, must have seemed two hundred years ago. Only the lacy sumac, which reminds you of Palm Sunday, and the wild cucumber, with its flat green tongues of leaves, thrive there among the strong, high, ignoring trees.

So when I walked up there in August I knew already not to look for the accepted signs of human habitation in the hollow. Of course, near its mouth, where the flat land broadened out like a saddle, there was room for small corn-fields, and a few of the houses had been at some time painted. They were three or four rooms large, and their thin walls, although no more than an inch thick between the wind and the sheltering inside, were built of the wide vertical boards sealed by narrow ones in true, neat, upright 'Jennie Lind' style. In front of a few of the houses were rows of dusty asters; some had vines along the wooden porches; one even a small cut plot of grass. But these houses faced down toward the branch mouth, their backs to the rest of the hollow as if their original builders in the fierce snobbery of self-preservation had only backed a little up the hollow, and didn't count on staying there for good.

But further up the houses were a travesty, even of these. The board walls had never felt paint in whatever lost years they'd managed to withstand the weather. The bases of the boards had never, in most of them, been cut to match; the bottom of the walls were like rows of rotten, uneven teeth. They were shelters so without beauty or even finish they seemed fit only for animals or desert saints, convenient for the hunting of wild honey.

So when I passed Congress Burney's house, a mile or so up Cow Horn, I knew, not by the head-high weeds, or the broken windows, or the still, poised Queen Anne's Lace, not even by

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the narrow car-tracks, already almost repossessed by crab-grass and dust, that the house was empty. No, there was desertion in the air that told you, long before you counted up the evidence—a kind of unwantedness, a gradual grey bending to the final gravity of the hard ground to which the neglected always returns, a dry shrinking, board by board, so that, uninhabited, Congress's house seemed too small and fragile for any living people—that, not the weeds, told me: that, and the fact that Congress's chair had been uprooted from the lean-to porch and was gone. The chair, had stood so solid on the flimsy porch, bolted down with rusty bolts so that it was a menace to bare-footed children. Now there was a ragged hole, as if, too strong for the world in which it found itself, the chair had escaped and taken the boards clinging to it, like Samson covered with stone-dust from the gates of Gaza. There was little evocation in the ragged, dusty space. No, the Burneys had gone, and had taken all evidence with them that they had ever existed.

But how much evidence do Hollow people ever leave? Archeologists claim to conjure up from a handful of black earth years below the surface, the ancient camp-fires, even of nomads. Well, the nomads must have dug their heels down pretty hard. Even I, who long ago had stretched my arms up high to lean across the gate which now seemed so low and weak, now reaching down to open it, watching the over-grown path for snakes, almost missed with my eyes but not with the pull of my hand, that the old ten-pound store weight that Congress had put on the chain could still shut the little gate behind me. No more, nothing more about the empty shack could convince me now of the family.

Parting the shaggy bushes and staring in though the broken window, I could see that the board floor of the kitchen had sagged in places to let in the green light reflected by the weeds under the house; the iron stove was torn out, only a tin pipe hung down from a corrugated fancy iron frill. I could not read the yellow newspapers lying along the floor in the dim light, but I could smell the human shit under them—the final insult on the failures of permanent settlers delivered by

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the last nomads—the tramps. The Burney family had not even left foundations, just two by fours to hold up the flooring a couple of feet off the ground. No fires; no heels dug in; nothing. I turned away up the memory of a path.

My foot caught against a hazard hidden in the weeds, and I fell, as clumsy as ever, across the yard. I reached down to free myself and pulled out a wheel—the wooden wheel of Fairfax's wagon, left like a joke on me. That was the trouble with those Burneys. They'd always trick you like that, trick you into remembering them when you were about to give even their fragments up for lost. That's what they were made of; fragments lost in the general tiredness, like promises of diamonds in the dung, and those bright tricks would catch you in your mind's eye in places halfway across the world when the sun would fling a long shadow across a London or a Paris street the Burneys never heard of, and Congress would rise up from the shadow, moseying along the back road to Cow Horn at supper-time, kicking the dust. It was like that with his name, too; just a fragment of a past when some Burney had thought so much of the idea of a new country that he had handed down the names of Jefferson, of Fairfax county in Virginia, and of the new Continental Congress to his children. By Congress's birth the reasons had long been forgotten. Only the names were left, cut off, so far as you could tell, from the current which inspired them.

I sat, annoyed, a big lady in a shirt-waist dress, acceptable, with Fairfax's trick in my hand, looking up. The house from there was bigger and hidden in the weeds like the wheel, Congress's family had left their past, but I no longer needed to find the objects: the sun, the weeds, my new size and the broken wheel, I remembered it as I had first seen it, when the leaf in the crack was still fluttering a little, still had at least the spasmodic twitch of life about it.

The first time I remember any Burneys was when I was up to visit my grandmother, and she took me with her to see a cousin who had been filed in her old age in one of the good houses facing out of the hollow, for a future reference which

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obviously was never going to come. She was a tiny, sharp woman, and she had sat for years on her front porch, passing judgments, refusing to move, drawing, with the force of her physical frailty and her untender mind, relatives to see her, trudging up the dusty road with duty baskets, year in, year out.

A tow-headed boy, younger than me, was suddenly in sight hurtling toward us down the sloped dirt road in a wooden paintless wagon, raising the dust. Another tow-head, a girl my own age, sat behind him. They jerked over the stones right down the middle of the road, bounding, not veering left or right for us, too intent on the more present danger of the ruts and reefs of dust-covered rock. By the weight of their silence and their aggressive concentration they forced us out into soft dust.

My grandmother murmured something about "...got no right..." but not to me as she stood there slapping the dust out of her skirt. Before we went on I could see that the wagon had come to some kind of grief, probably on a rock. A little while later the two of them came trudging back up the road, the girl pulling the wagon, without either of them seeming to be conscious that the other was there.

The old woman pinned their comments to them as they passed, in a desultory way, as if the remarks were not special to the children, but the children, instead, excuses for the remarks. But there was enough which would only apply to Burney, and not to species 'people up Cow Horn' to give me some idea and keep me eavesdropping.

"Ain't that youngin the spit of his paw?" They watched the boy's back as he would away up the road.

"Puttin' on all them airs and graces. Fairfax—what a name for a no-count tow-head. Them tow-heads ain't no different from all the rest of the trash up yonder." Cousin Esse stopped talking to chomp her teeth into place. She grinned. "Reckon hit didn't take one of them Burneys long to fix his flint with all her fancy ways callin everybody by their first name. Five youngins learned her..." She chomped her teeth again, which she had to do every sentence or so.

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Unconsciously, she had learned to use the sound like a loose bit, to give point to what she said—an aural, vindictive full-stop.

It was my grandmother's way to fuss a little with Cousin Esse. I don't know why. She could be full enough of malice herself at times. But some way the chomp of Esse's bit over a person's reputation always made her defend them by reaction, even though she didn't care at all.

"Well, I wouldn't talk like that about Lil Addie if I was you, Esse. After all you never was a purty woman, so you ain't got no idea how a purty woman gits tempted." My grandmother smiled and reflected to herself for a minute. After all, she *had* been a purty woman. Her voice went on, in a sleepy afternoon exchange of morals and sayings with Cousin Esse. I stopped listening, having gathered enough to know that Congress Burney and his wife Lil Addie had five youngins, that the boy pulling the wagon was named Fairfax, that Lil Addie put on airs but was pretty, and that they had had to get married because he fixed his flint, which was a mysterious thing done deep in temptation.

That night out the screen door I heard my aunt talking to a woman, and as soon as I heard the name of Lil Addie I scuttled out to see the pretty fallen woman whose pride had once been and maybe still was fancy.

If Lil Addie had been pretty, she sure wasn't any more. Even in the half light of the big back porch with its naked swinging forty watt bulb, I could see, with the objective cruelty of a child, that she was nothing but a skinny piece of pore white trash. Her stick legs stood astraddle and her flat body seemed to crouch forward over a space, flat-sided. Neither breasts nor stomach protruded to shape her dark blue Mother Hubbard dress, in which I saw a long rent, which her hand kept clawing at, almost acting on its own, to keep her leg from showing through. She was brown and seasoned-looking, her hair, eyes and skin all tinged the color of weak tea. Already some of her teeth were gone, but enough still met in the front to keep her sharpening nose and chin at an angle of pride, and her brown eyes looked from under

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the porch of a perpetual scowl—either from old fury, or from looking for too many years into the far distance. That was what thirty-five years of Cow Horn life had done to Lil Addie Burney.

Her voice rose and fell, talking to my aunt. I couldn't get the drift of what she was saying, but a note of querulousness carried it all like a high, thin carrier wave. The reason I couldn't follow was that much of what she was saying were familiar laments like, "Fingers to the bone from morning 'til night." The words, "They ain't nary a thing I can do, Meely" (that was my aunt), "I've tried, Gawd knows!" rang like a knell, over and over. But there was nothing of a story for me to follow—that part seemed to sink down out of ear-shot.

Later my aunt came on into the kitchen and said, "I'll declare, I feel downright sorry for Lil Addie. She started out so good too."

"Well, what do you expect, picking up with them no-count Burneys?" My grandmother told her, "Lay thar dirty and expect you to come do their scratchin'."

"She was such a pretty girl, too," my aunt said sadly, "but what can you do?"

But nobody said a word about Congress, and what favor Lil Addie had obviously been asking I had no suspicion of until the next day.

I just thought if I went up the hollow, Fairfax might let me ride down in his wagon. I wanted somebody to play with so badly that morning. Our yard was empty and the spaces in it were wide and I had that yearning which children articulate by saying they haven't got anything to do.

We just got started to playing together. I don't remember how. But I remember Lil Addie because she came out on the front porch in my aunt's old Hoover apron, all freshly washed and ironed.

I hollered out, full of myself, "I know whur you got that! It's my Ant Meely's."

She came down off the porch and fetched me a slap with her skinny hand. "Thar, you little piss-ant. Run and tell

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your antie how much I pershate it!" The flare of anger left her as quickly as it had come. She sagged off down the dark yard, both the temper and the interest in me as gone if the spark hadn't lit them and she didn't care. But of course, I didn't tell my aunt or anybody else, because I liked Fairfax and Mintha and the middle sister Sara (they pronounced it Sorry) who, although she was three years older—nearly fourteen, had promised to play with us sometime when she didn't have anything to do. I hadn't meant to say anything mean, just to show off in front of Fairfax and Mintha.

That was the family I got to going to see whenever I could. Behind them, only glimpsed coming down the path out of the woods behind the shack, or tending the forty-five degree patch of corn angled precariously against the opposite hill across the branch, was Congress.

If Lil Addie had nothing of her prettiness left in her face, Congress had those Burney fragments still of being downright handsome. It took a long time for me to know that. Most people in that part of the world couldn't see anything handsome about a long lank spare-boned hillbilly in a pair of overalls with the strap busted, just as they would look down on that fine, corn-colored hair most of the youngins have, called tow-head, because it happens to be common. But now as I see him, he had a kind of pride about him—that and silence that made you remember him. He had deep, dark eyes set back in their sockets so that they had the look of Rembrandt's old rabbi, a little flicker of fierceness left, but sad beyond hope. His features were sharp, and his jaws sunk in under the ledges of his cheekbones making deep lines down from his eyes to his chin like branches run dry. He was brown, too, brown like Lil Addie, with a thick shock of brown hair falling forward, and big brown loose long hands. Even skinny and poor as he was, Congress's back was always as straight as a slat.

For a long time he and Lil Addie didn't seem to get on at all. If he'd fixed his flint for love of her on some damned Saturday night, boy, she sure had sharpened her tongue to pay him back for it over the years. I never heard him answer

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her or even seem to be listening when she railed at him—the only thing anybody ever saw Congress do then was to get up slowly off the front porch and walk out of her sight and mind up the hill path when she was fussing too much. What it was ever about, I don't know. I doubt if any of the family could remember what would start her off—it was that carrier wave again, the whine, which you'd remember, and not the words she said. You got used to it.

When Lil Addie cried out, "I've tried, Gawd knows!" on the windy back porch that night, she was telling the truth. She did try, but she was inclined to make her efforts in spasms—half finished gestures—more and more noticeable as the leaf worked itself further into the crack in the wall. She'd holler at the dog to get up and get off Congress's chair, which was the only object the family seemed to have any pride in, the only one they didn't tear at when they got hold of it like it was a barrier in their way instead of something to use. They could tear and break more things! You should have seen the junk just laying around that place, like Fairfax's wagon which only lasted one year after he got it. Mine lasted five years. I hated it anyway. The dog would just pick up its heavy eyes and gaze at her, and by the time he closed them again she'd have given up the effort. Sometimes when she was near enough she would haul off and kick him.

I remember her putting up Christmas decorations, the only year they had any. She cut out those little profiles of old-fashioned girls which was all she remembered how to make from grade-school, and pasted them on some of the kitchen panes. Then she hung one of those crinkly red tissue paper bells that fold up like fans on the edge of the porch roof over the steps, and sat down on Congress's chair and gazed at it swinging there in the December weather until her old skinny bare legs were purple and blue. Then she forgot it all, or let it fade unnoticed into the days, for the bell just hung there until the wind blew it down into the wet cold March mud under a spindled naked bush, and when the bush got leaves even the cardboard skeleton was hidden for ever. By fall it was part of the ground. So in a way, Lil Addie's

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gestures were taken over and made inevitable and meaningful by nature—as if, indeed, Gawd did know.

Congress's attempts to move were more solid, more sustained although they were done, one after the other, inevitably as soil erosion or the love acts of elephants: so slowly that even from the advantage of years I have trouble remembering their procession, so quietly that not a soul knew, least of all Lil Addie, what he was up to—for a long time anyway.

It began with the chair. It was enough to make anybody coming for the first time up the wild overgrown hollow stop and stare because it was a barber-chair; brown plush, with singed tassels and a sprung seat where chickens had picked out tendrils of the straw lining. But dilapidated as it was, carrying like banners the signs of its ruin, it sat on that sorry porch like a throne. How it came to be there I never found out but I suspect that he'd hoisted it up off a junk heap somewhere and pushed it home on a wheel-barrow. It had obviously been burned at one time. It no longer tromped up and down at the touch of the barber's foot and it didn't lean back any more. All its joints had stiffened with age, but then, Congress was so straight backed himself, maybe he didn't know it was supposed to tip. Of course I never thought of the barber-chair until later as part— maybe the beginning—of Congress's struggle, but I see now it was. There must have been a time, when he first brought it home, when the sight of it must have stopped Lil Addie's nagging; she must have paused a little, for even when I knew them she still respected the chair; well, noticed it anyway. But as I say, by the time I'm talking about, she'd been long at the paying back of Congress again, and forgotten any hopes she might have had about the chair. But it was so important that that's why I knew at once when the chair was missing that the house was empty, and Congress had died or gone away.

So she didn't pay any attention when Congress started going off by habit, not up the hill path behind the house, nor to the corn patch over the branch, but down the hollow road into the little town. When she nagged, he'd go, and stay for

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hours. He'd lean with the rest of the trash around the board walk porch of Fratelli's, only instead of squatting against the clapboard of the restaurant or general store front and staring outward at cars going by, Congress did a different thing. He'd balance his hands between his knees in front and lower his back gently down the barber-pole which stood at the corner of the porch. He'd squat there on his heels for hours staring inwards to the barber-shop looking as lonesome as the last man on earth, not talking to a soul. If all this hanging around sounds lazy, I suppose it is. But remember, the bottom had dropped out of the coal business in 1927 and this was 1931. Most of these men, even the ones who hadn't been miners, had worked around the tipple. I think there's something about Hollow people—they don't make good miners, any more than you can grow ginseng roots in a little closed pot instead of the wide, deep woods. You wouldn't have thought just squatting there looking in a window was all part of Congress's plan, but it was. I honestly believe it was.

The real action, what there was of it, began when the oldest Burney boy got home from the penitentiary. He was the first-born; just in the bounds of wedlock when Lil Addie was fifteen years old, and must have looked, still tow-headed like Sorry, as pretty as everybody always said she used to be. The son, Jarcy, was a wild boy; not wild like a stallion, but wild more like a possum, his growth stunted so he only came to Congress's shoulder. He got in some fight down in town one Saturday night and got two years, and when he came home he went right out and got a job through some prisoner's aid society doing carpentering, the trade he'd been taught to do in the pen. For two wonderful weeks in which Lil Addie would hardly speak to a soul, Jarcy was the only employed man in Cow Horn Hollow. But he no sooner got settled than he used his new hammer to knock somebody over the head and ran away. Everybody agreed that he was a real no-count and never would amount to anything, but he got out of the hollow the direct way, just by running for it. My grandmother had a lot to say about "using tax-payer's money to teach a lot of trash to get too big for their britches."

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She was of the generation and temper of women who did their talking in raw phrases instead of words and who believed you got sent to the pen for punishment; that the wrath of man should break and mortify like the wrath of God. Finally she hit on a calculated price for Jarcy's new hammer, not taking into account it was paid for by charity, and went on about it for days. When Jarcy disappeared was the only time I saw Lil Addie cry. She really loved the boy and showed it, but I never heard her mention him again. He was gone for good.

It was because she was so upset about Jarcy—none of the kids dared to go near her for those few weeks—that she didn't see at all what was going on in Congress's mind. I don't suppose she would have paid any attention anyway, though. But I was there to see it, because it happened just at the time I always went up without permission to play with Fairfax and Mintha.

I saw the car coming down out of the hollow. It was along about ten o'clock—a morning as hot as the day I last saw the house. I saw it coming down in a cloud of dust—the government Chevvie that everybody in that town could recognise, the only car that ever came up the hollow. It was the revenuer's car. He used to come to supper at our house and I remember how ashamed I was that the Chevvie was out front all evening for people to see.

I saw with my own eyes, Congress Burney standing there beside the road, holding up his hand. I saw him lean half into the car on his arms like a man does when he isn't in any hurry, and put his foot up on the running board to steady himself. Then I heard him say the only whole sentence he ever said in my hearing.

"Know anybody wants to buy a gallon of licker?"

J. R. Trumbold wasn't a very quick man. He was pink and fat and always looked a little out of breath as if he'd just finished an important job. He started acting clever with Congress as if he were trying to catch him.

He told my aunt and my grandmother about it at supper, right in front of me, as if he hadn't known I was there

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listening. He ought to have known—he shooed me off himself when he saw me, oogaed that old Chevvie horn and yollered out, "You kids git on home outa the road," as if I were a whole gang instead of one little old lonesome youngin.

That was after he'd asked Congress in a smirking interested way what kind of licker he had in mind.

Congress spat in the road dust, and told him slowly. "Ain't nothing but red-eye, Mist. Trumbold."

"I got him around all right, " Mr. Trumbold told them at supper. "Honest to God, Miz Lacey, you'd think they'd have better sense. He just saw my car and come out right in the open like that. Of course, I said I was interested all right." Mr. Trumbold looked serious and even pinker. "I coulda been walkin right into a ambush—right smack into one—but I went on up there with him."

"Well, where *was* it?" Ant Meely interrupted. She always acted so over-interested when Mr. Trumbold told anything. It made me sick.

"Right up that path behind the house. Right up there on the side of the hill, not more'n two hundred yards. Right smart little still he had there. Real good care took of it. Why by evening we'd throwed out about thirty gallons of mash."

He must have read my mind and been shocked because he turned around right out of the blue and said as if we were having an argument, "Do you have any idea what they put in that stuff? Chipmunks,—squirrels—it's terrible. And then people drink that rot-gut. Pay for it!"

I didn't say anything. I knew darn well you have to put a little meat into a mash to get decent licker—but Mr. Trumbold was sold on his job all right. So was Ant Meely, by the way she was looking. You could see him like a crusader, upsetting people's stills, running off illegal whiskey down into the valleys, making little smoking rivers around the trees—a real gone federal government man! The most effect Mr. Trumbold had was to run the price of red-eye up for a month or so after a raid. Then things would settle down again. I'm still apt after all these years to run that

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little fat man down, but he was a brave man, don't think he wasn't. Don't think people didn't get shot doing Mr. Trumbold's job, plenty of them. Revenuers never were very popular.

"Oh, Lord God, what's going to happen to Lil Addie?" Ant Meely moaned and looked carefully at her finger-nails, thinking about it.

Grandmaw took a plainer view of the whole thing. "She's a lot better off without him for a little while—them Burneys air no-count anyhow. One less mouth to feed."

"After all, he won't get more'n a year." Mr. Trumbold was switching fast to sympathy to match my aunt's.

"What's a year, after all?" My aunt saw that she had thrown off some way on Mr. Trumbold's job.

"Nothing more'n a year," he was smiling now, pleased.

"Git him up there and give him a college education like Jarcy in that time, won't you? Nother way of spending the taxpayer's money," my grandmother wiped the smile off his face, reminding Mr. Trumbold that he was a government man, and where she stood on the whole question. "Congress'll never get ahead, don't worry about that. He'll be back to normalcy in no time." It was her turn to laugh.

When I went up to the Burney's house, as soon as I could, drawn as people are to the scene of an accident, or a fire, the house looked almost as dusty and dead but with shock, not desertion as on the morning I sat, a grown woman in the weeds remembering all this slowly. None of the kids were anywhere to be seen. Neither was Congress. I peeped into the same pane of the window—not broken then, and saw that the kitchen was empty, too. Not even Lil Addie was about. Then I heard the sound from the dark cavern of the lean-to bedroom, not of crying, that would have been bad enough, but of a woman rolling back and forth, back and forth, on the dry shuck mattress, making it crackle like rats running and shuffling. It was Lil Addie, making not a cry, just rolling there by herself as if something hurt. I ran off down the hot road, afraid.

Well, Congress got a year all right. Whether they taught

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him to be a barber or not, I don't know. He never said, but just went on with his silent plan to get ahead. No sooner was he home than he set up as a barber, not by putting up a sign, but by standing outside in front of his barber-chair with a pair of scissors he'd picked up somewhere, clipping the air in front of him from time to time, like he'd seen the barber down at the barber shop do. His only advertisements were Mintha and Sorry and Fairfax, whose hair he had carefully cut, short—no boy-cut or girl-cut—just plain, something like the pudding-bowl they had always had, but neater. That way he began to get customers, all people who lived up Cow Horn. But they would pay a dime to have their kids' hair cut. Down town it was a quarter.

It was only then that Lil Addie sensed what Congress had been up to all that time, and though you had to watch closely to see whether she noticed or not—you could tell. She didn't do that quick jerky hollering any more, well very seldom anyway, and once or twice I'd see her come out on the porch above where Congress was standing and just put her hands on his shoulders and rest them there for a minute, without saying a word. He wouldn't turn around. He'd just go on watching out across the road, not saying a word either but standing very still, as if a wild bird had lit on his shoulder and he didn't want to scare it.

Of course Roosevelt came in about that time and things changed. I heard my aunt complain that Lil Addie had gotten as uppity as she could be. She certainly didn't wear my aunt's old Hoover aprons any more. As a matter of fact she would hardly speak to any of us and I outgrew the Burneys and didn't want to go where I wasn't welcome anyway. So I didn't see much more of them. She had a new Hoover apron of her own, and I'm sure that Congress earned the money to buy it for her by the way she sported it, but my grandmother would insist it was relief and call it Lil Addie's "Roosevelt dress".

Wasn't it funny? Here I was, who'd already been half across the world and little to show for it, down among the weeds in the hot sun, everything about the Burney's as alive

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as the jarflies I could hear all around me. When I got back to the cool shelter of our own front porch and lay along the swing, I interrupted my aunt, who was reading, to ask her what had ever become of them. She looked up from her book, and made a sound in between a laugh and a snort.

"Oh they moved as soon as Fairfax went to the army. Just picked up lock, stock and barrel and waltzed off, owing something like ten year's rent."

"You mean we *own* that shack?" I sat bolt upright in the swing.

"Lord's love, child, didn't you know that?" My aunt's head went down again, and she went back to her reading, closing the subject.

HE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Again that weary day when He must share
The wickedness of men who do not spare
Him birth. See now they penetrate His will,
Petitioners who fear the twilight's chill.

He must be born again; time needs His pain;
The ignorant must see the loved one slain.
They doubted Him—away—but His return
Will make them rage, and He must hang or burn.

Midday nativity; and God's defiled,
And placed within the body of a child.
Mad sacrilege to crowd him into bone,
And treat Him as a thing that space can own.

O Virgin, God is sucking at your breast,
But He will bring you little joy or rest.
O wise men, now divinity is here,
He has no Word to make His meaning clear.

—Cecil Hemley

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MICHEL DE SAINT PIERRE

Translated by Max Steele

THE ARISTOCRATS

M. de Maubrun liked Paris: a royal and majestic city which, nevertheless, the Republic had used wisely. Surely the first city of the world!

The marquis knew that he was chauvinistic. There was nothing he could do about it. The more the twentieth century pushed France into the row of little nations, the prouder he was to be a Frenchman. He went calmly to revisit the Louvre, Versailles, Notre-Dame, Saint-Denis —and then he felt better. Paris in July—bright, spacious, brilliant with leaves and blue days—was reassuring to him. The new merchandise he saw in the large store windows seemed worthy of these old stones. In the streets he contemplated women of a beauty not to be found in any other corner of the world.

On his arrival he telephoned Marie-Antoinette de Laval. (Her friends called her 'Marinette' or sometimes only 'Nenette'). For ten years she had been his mistress and he had a great longing to see her again. She was a widow, rosy, pretty—almost of a violent beauty.

Nénette had answered that she would of course be delighted to spend an evening with him. She even begged him to stay two or three days in Paris. "You were lucky to have found me," she told him. "I'm just here on a flying trip and absolutely must go back to Deauville. If you promise to stay a few days though, so will I." She invited him to dinner the next evening, adding: "If you think you can bear a quiet meal alone with me."

Maubrun, in his little week-end apartment on the rue Talleyrand, slept that night like a child. The pain and

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anxiety of the train trip had entirely disappeared. He awakened fresh and well-disposed, lunched alone at the Jockey Club, then had himself chauffered out to Père Lachaise. And there, following the paved streets amid the tombstones terraced in the green, he walked among the dead, smoking his pipe and listening to the song of the birds. The earth exhaled a poignant odor, where the former glories of stone and plaster had crumbled away in a most sweet forgetfulness...

Nénette, Marquise de Laval, was born Carmen, daughter of a well-known perfumer. After two years of marriage she had lost a husband whom she loved without passion and whom she mourned without excess.

From head to foot she was coated with an aristocratic varnish. But scratch it with the fingernail and the lacquer chipped. The pastime amused M. de Maubrun. Each year, in May, he stayed two weeks in Paris. His little apartment on the rue Talleyrand seemed to him dowdy, musty and dark. But Nénette entertained him and rarely tired of him. In her fashion she loved him: without pretending to be faithful the other eleven months. The marquis came to Paris from time to time simply to indicate his feelings. She represented to him nothing more than a warm, young mistress. He had not been able to capture and tag this bird in flight, but he had no illusions about it: he knew her type very well, that you could not demand too much of them.

He did not wish to break with this beautiful creature for the simple reason that he was the most discreet man in the world, timid, but also totally devoid of vanity. Indeed, it pleased him that his liason with her was hidden: he liked to meet Madame de Laval at a cocktail party, to see her shivering slightly; and, because of her red hair, standing out so much like a flaming torch that her charm was abused and the sparkle of her green eyes dissipated. At such moments, but with a great deal of difficulty, he affected boredom, for his pride found a choice substance in the knowledge that she would, without the least doubt, be his the same evening.

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Before dinner Maubrun sent flowers to her apartment on the rue du Faubourg St. Honoré.

She was wearing that evening a satin robe, brocaded in gold. In a moment of frivolity she had put on her emeralds. Her chignon was undone and her magnificent red hair fell to her shoulders.

"I brought you a little champagne," the marquis said. "And some foie gras." He noticed that the apartment—formerly furnished with antiques of astonishing beauty—now had ultra-modern paintings side by side with them and 'arrangements' by a surrealist decorator.

"You're a love!" She led him by the hand. "I know you don't like my little domesticities, but I've let the servants go."

They dined alone in an immense dining room. Madame de Laval chatted without hearing her own words. She adored talking, he adored listening. They were perfectly matched. Before attacking the cold chicken, M. de Maubrun raised his eyebrows and said in a severe tone: "There was a Hubert Robert on that panel. And there, if I'm not mistaken, a sketch, a Fragonard..."

She raised her finger, like a schoolgirl who wants permission to speak: "I have juggled..." she said.

"How's that: *juggled*—"

She broke out laughing. "Well... yes, exactly that: juggled, jiggled, liquidated, sold!"

A wave of stupefication rose over the marquis' face, broke, and finally swept back, leaving exposed there, the liveliest curiosity. For a long time he studied the paintings in question, one a sort of green monster with three arms; the other a conglomeration of objects, undecipherable, in red and blue, among which one could discern a naked breast. These two works had respectively taken the place of the Fragonard and of the Hubert Robert. The marquis' taste was sickened.

"You are not going to tell me you are seriously thinking of keeping these horrors, in place of those exquisite works..."

She stood up, moved quickly round the table and touched Maubrun's temple with brief little kisses. Then she kissed him directly on the ear, a thing he detested.

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"You're a love, Jean. You understand nothing in the world about painting, but you're a love..."

She returned to her place. A sort of uneasiness seized the marquis. Nénette was sincere. She was not a snob. "At least not too much of one," Maubrun thought. She had not bought these modern paintings to be fashionable. But since there they were, in the place of honor, it must actually be that she liked them

He reflected an instant. "Art is what exists in our most profound depths. If the artistic needs change at this point, it is because everything else has already changed." He ended his brief meditiation aloud: "I have always tried to understand, Nénette. But this time I really believe I am too old."

They went into the salon. There, Madame de Laval, letting her satin robe fall partly open, stretched out on the divan and motioning Maubrun away from the armchair he was eyeing, patted the cushion beside her. She turned up her lips to be kissed.

A clock struck ten. Darkness had fallen. Through the open garden window came the muted voice of Paris, purring like a happy cat.

Maubrun stood up and looked at her directly. "Nénette, I have a great deal of work to do this evening. I have an appointment tomorrow at the Commission des Preuves de la Noblesse and my cases must be prepared. I'm going to let you rest. If you'll pardon me."

She bounded to her feet.

"What are you saying? But you are crazy. For the one time I have you, the one time I see you!"

"Please, Marinette..."

Maubrun had spoken softly. He was afraid she would reproach him. Make a scene. That she would try to keep him. She turned, lightly, tears in her eyes without a doubt. But then she pivoted on her high heels and gazed at him. "I wish," she said, "only what you wish, Jean."

He smiled and it was the palm of her hand he kissed.

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IN HIBERNIS

Winter is thick as rock
In the quarry of icy season
And snow squeals underfoot:
Locomotives' smoke
Shivers and sheds a poison
And duns the white with soot.

All that the failing year
Has done in seasonal range
Lapses to me by deed
Done as the season's heir:
For worse, better or change
I spend the year at need.

Why should a man beat out
The hot steel of his forces
For a weapon against a lie,
When in the year's rout
His stock is laughter, torsion
Wrenches time all awry?

Nothing takes single form
And simple in all weathers,
And, found, what he hoped to find
Turns from a seasonal warm
To seasonal cold and gathers
A personless hate, a mind

Of stone cropped out from snow
Resisting under the wind
The fettled stroke of the will,
A man's life-gathering blow,
And shocks the blade from his hand
That the turned year turn him still.

—Louis Coxe.

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THE PIT AND THE CENTURY PLANT

THE HOUSE

A little house. Abandoned. Rank with grasses. We must have passed it by a dozen times before we knew it was the place, so undistinguished it was, looking for all the world like any peasant cottage, squatting on its haunches behind a wooden gate closed up to stay with ivy and trumpet vine, mixed impartially in the business of regaining possession. Very dismal and deserted, the way I should always have known it would be. Not a modern house at all but a slightly reconverted farmer's dwelling.

We recognized it in the end not by the famous ornamental well which was completely covered with climbing things shooting off in every direction like the hair of a poodle's head, but by the garage that had been improvised out of a lean-to, the doors falling sadly inward serving now mostly to tell that civilization had once disgraced the place. The farthest cry from what the agent had described as possible, and in spite of the impressive key on its big brass ring, the front door would not even open. Would not budge, although the keyhole seemed to recognize the shape of its old friend (resentful perhaps for its long absence and sudden reappearance, sleek and confident as ever from its drawer in Paris), so after fighting our way through a wilderness of briars and snares of grass to bring about the mating, we had to climb through a window, which was futile too in the end, the back door being

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open as it must have been for years, judging from the way the moss on the stairs beneath was carpeting its way triumphantly inward.

There were five rooms, or six if you counted the back one which was too much damaged by the weather to be of use, all dark and damp and webbed by spiders. The stone floors of a farm everywhere except in the bedroom which had been added on later and was fairly dry though airless because of the smallness of the windows. A kitchen, or what must have been one once, piled up now with parts of rusted stove and other refuse, some recognizable as what they had been and some not quite. An electric coffee maker with the price tag still on looking as eccentric as a spring hat sitting in the sink. The promised plumbing was there all right but the pipes did not look in a usable condition. As for the furniture, it had disappeared long ago except for a bed with great gushing bloodstains on it and a kind of crazy cabinet with shelves going in every direction. A teeny chair. And aside from that, nothing. No one, no one, no one and nothing but beetles and spiders and the corpses of last years's bees and, in a basket on the stove a kind of sleeping rat, looking awfully cosy I must say. He didn't even yawn when I picked him up although it was nearly spring at that time and the place beside him where another had been was already vacant.

Just no one no one no one and nothing.

We hurried out again and began circling around the house, picking our way gingerly through the elephant plants holding cups of water and the briars and broken bottles and tins of things, trying to get up courage for the drive back. It all looked so desolate and unpromising, this snarl of early green. The wine cellar at the back blown open by some explosion, brackish water finding its level in it, swamped up with calendars of old leaves. German inscriptions gouged into the walls in places where the plaster was exposed. Tanks and swastikas and names and what the owners thought of one another in tedious gothic letters and, carved later after the danger had passed, "Vive la France" in capitals a little too large for the block so that the carver had had to recapitulate

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toward the end and " France" was very small and lost beside the "Vive". Desolate and unpromising and over everything a pall of time. Not so much dreamy as dreamed-out, forgotten and forlorn.

The only pretty things were the fields behind the house which were full of brown grass bending down, and a little ruined rosegarden sagging softly in the mist and the orchard with tiny fruit trees in it that could hardly have been there in their owner's time. Waist high in weeds, bordered by a fragile fence that leaned a little outwards with the weight of vines crocheted into the wire like a kind of fuzzy pocket handkerchief. And a pond with a white board beside it where someone had been washing lately. Mysterious, but at least connected with the living. A marvelously glossy black chicken looking for worms...

While we were standing here looking, not saying much, an old woman crossed the field from the farm next door as in a dream, and started coming toward us with a stick. Very old she appeared, and mostly made of gunnysacks tied about with string. She seemed to think we were relatives of the former owner and began telling a long intricate story about how she used to cook for him and a lot of other things I forget now not being interested at that moment.

No, Olivier kept telling her, no, he didn't think Madame would take the house but maybe now that we had been to see it someone else would come, not to disappoint her of a bit of gossip, but instead of accepting it she kept saying "Ah" in a very wise way, nodding her head and pursing up her mouth as if she were withholding some terribly vital piece of information like that the walls were wired to explode, the way country people are always doing when you tell them anything they have to turn over in their heads. It annoyed me, so while this was going on, the pursing and nodding and "*Eh bien's*", I left them standing by the pond, and began to wander back toward the house alone, where I found a Chinese Buddha sitting beneath a tree looking wise and knowing in another way holding onto his belly, and some more rusted boxes and nothing of interest.

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When Olivier still didn't come I sat down on my heels in front of the locked front door, and began listlessly pulling up the elephant ears that were growing there, to keep my hands from freezing. The leaves came off quite easily though I could feel the roots still sticking to the ground, and by the time we left I had made a neat clearing about the door-way where you could see the long wild grasses, yellow from being so long away from the light, and a few stones beneath, where—saddest yet—a path had been. It warmed me though and I didn't notice until we were in the car how wet it had made my gloves and how there were deep green stains across the palm.

"What were you talking about all that time," I asked Olivier, "the two of you down by the pond?"

"Nothing much," Olivier told me, "Just the way things were in Monsieur Lester's time," and we began saying to each other what a queer man he must have been living alone like that in his peasant house with plumbing, too far away to invite anyone for the week-end and nothing to amuse him and Olivier said probably he had his reasons although he couldn't see what they were just then, and I shivered and got out a rag and began wiping off the windows which had clouded up almost completely with the mist so that we could hardly see from the time we left the house until we got to Fontainebleau. And that way, with the windows fogged over and the radio on talking of other things, the whole trip—the house, the ruined garden, the pond and even the old woman—turned more dream than anything else. In fact, if it hadn't been for the big key still rattling around in the front of the car and my spoiled gloves I could have thought we had never been there. There certainly seemed no reason for going back, so when Olivier, laughing, asked me at dinner if I thought it was the right house I was more surprised than he was to hear myself answering,

"Yes. Yes... I think it is..."

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THE HAIR

And I meant it too.

The only thing was it was more difficult convincing myself to go than making up my mind. For one thing I was working for a maison de couture at this time, modelling dresses and I love to model. I always have. Love posing, primping, dressing up, getting in and out of clothes, even when I'm not going any further than the first salon to show myself to a couple of old ladies who have come to copy designs from the last show, knowing as they always do a little place just off the Madeleine where they can get the same thing for nothing. "*Regardez comme elle est mal faite dans le dos, Chérie !*" Eyes piercing. Voices lowered.

I love the touch, the air, the cling, the solemn believable fantasy of everything, changing, changing all the time like a sort of human weather without end. The gilt chairs, the little sofas, grey vendeuses in the wings. Whispering. Directrice everywhere at once, playing perpetual hostess to an affair that never quite gets given.

Oh, it's lovely!

I even enjoy just sitting around in the dressing-room where someone is always furious and it is too hot or too cold and there is never any drinking water and a person of no importance is asking to see the clothes of someone who is sick. Or standing in the studio being pinned and unpinned. It's tedious, but the materials have such a smell as they come out of the bolt. It's great fun watching genius, mouthful of pins, at work. Being photographed and drawn. There is a satisfaction in being transferred to a long white sheet of paper without any effort of your own. It gives you a sense of vicarious accomplishment. At least to me it does and... oh, I like all of it. Could pass my life that way —just being pinned and unpinned and too hot or too cold or reading "Vogue"—and not even wonder where the days had gone later. Not that I'm lazier than most but I enjoy it.

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Then too there was Olivier, so all in all, though I knew I wanted to write my book by this time and kept talking about it and making preparations and turning it over in my head, I didn't go. Didn't really believe it and kept having things come up (people visiting in Paris, an appointment with the hairdresser, going to one more play, eating one more dinner, staying for one more show), kept finding hundreds of things which combined to stretch the time right up to the last second when I was packed and leaving, and even then I was not quite sure it was real.

"How pretty the scenery is," I thought to myself, "what a fine day for the races. I really must call Sue..."

When Olivier stopped at a country store and made me buy a pair of rubber boots I laughed at him and it occurred to me we had brought a mighty lot of sardines for one person. I never stopped chattering for a minute and I was gayer than ever as we approached the gate, this time forcing the vines back brutally. I laughed as we made the first damp smokey fire and sat down gingerly to eat some bisquits. In fact the whole thing seemed more like more like a delicious picnic than a housewarming of the chilliest sort and it wasn't until an hour or so later when my suitcase was in and Olivier was starting the car that I began looking around and shivering.

"Well," said Olivier, sensing I expect that if he stayed on much longer I might be going to be difficult, "well..."

By the time he had reached the car door I was up on him.

"No no no no," I cried, "Never in a million years! You come back here this instant! I refuse! You're not going to leave me in this awful house," and I began throwing together my possessions as quickly as I could manage. "Take this, and this. And that..."

I still do not know how the idea came to me to cut off my hair. Perhaps it was the nail scissors slipping out onto the bricks the way they did like a kind of omen, or perhaps I was showing off, or perhaps it was for reasons even deeper. I don't suppose I shall ever know, but while I was still crying and Olivier was still carrying away the sardines and the groceries I went into the cold silent oozing bathroom and started

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clipping. Hacking and sawing. Any old way, close to the scalp.

"You might as well let me get it even anyway," I remember saying as Olivier came in blank with surprise and while he stood there too bewildered to protest I went on until there was nothing left but a kind of prickle and a few long limp strands like the only survivors of some ghastly massacre. Very proud and lonely they looked too, and rather at a loss.

"Goodbye," I said when I had finished, "I'll be seeing you when it grows out..."

I did not trust myself to wave from the gate though or even to go to the window. Nor did I open the door when he came back again a few minutes later. I just stood numb and cold by the hearth, and when he continued to knock and call and knock I shouted rudely.

"Go away. Don't be a baby..." and covered my ears until I was sure he was gone. Then I seized the first thing that came to hand, which was a pair of wooden bloomers as it happened, and wrapped up my head and went out to try to get acquainted with my prison. To look it over again and try to get resigned.

Round and round I went. Round and round and round in my new boots and woolen bloomers, like we had walked the first day only so dismally not. Looking across the fields, naming the trees to myself. Seeing the dark come on as one day I would have seen it come on a hundred times yet always different. Damp. Grey. Day turning to night as gradually as a photograph left too long in the developer and just as relentlessly...

"Oh God," I thought. "Oh mercy, oh heavens, oh saints... I've made a terrible mistake but there must still be some way out of it. I certainly don't have to stay..."

And then, quite softly, it began to rain.

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THE RAIN

It rained.

Day and night it rained. Sunup till sundown it rained, sundown till dawn. Sometimes hard and sometimes not and sometimes just a drizzle, but all the time it rained.

Water was everywhere. In the yard and in the house and rushing in the gulleys. It flowed down the road under the doors and into the shed until there wasn't a stick of dry wood left and the walls steamed and sweated. Nothing and nowhere was dry and sometimes it seemed to me as if it never could have been. I stood at the window watching the water come down and felt like Noah without animals. Sometimes after dark, hearing the slush and splash and seeing nothing, I was certain the house had already gone afloat.

It was a fearful time.

There was nothing to do but dust and read and make tea on the hearth from which by now all fun had vanished. I could not even wash the floors for fear they would never be dry again. At intervals while it was day I would go out and walk around in my rubber boots in the sodden yard looking into the sky, trying to see a clearing, but I never did and I would have to come back in again and start reading detective stories and dusting and making tea or soup on the embers.

Then I caught flu.

After that I did not care if it rained or hailed or snowed as long as I didn't have to go out in it. I didn't care to eat or read or even much to think. I didn't care for anything as long as I could lie by the fire and be warm and do nothing and

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sleep. I would get up every few hours and go to the garage and carry back more logs for the fire and lie down again and go back to dreaming.

Except at night. And then I could not sleep for listening.

As soon as the sun gave up I would close the shutters and bolt the doors and light the lamps and turn on my battery radio at the head of the bed and that is how I would stay until morning, listening to the radio and looking at the fire and trying not to hear the rain and the silence outside, and trying to tell the difference in the different noises that broke it.

The program I liked best was the no-language program that came on the air about midnight and stayed till nearly dawn. It was the only program I could get after one o'clock and it was very faint as though it was coming from terribly far away and you could not tell what the people were saying. You could not even tell what language they were saying it in. It sounded like Greek and Latin and German and French and Portugese and everything there is rolled into one. But when it was very late at night and there was nothing else to hear except the silence and the water dripping off the eaves I often understood the words of it.

Sometimes I would hear whole sentences in French or English. Crazy things like "cream your fountains in live rice" and "the blinds are drawn too far" or unrelated things like "bring your children to the shoemaker and treat their burns" Or simple endearing things like "come back soon", "we are waiting". Nothing that made sense but it was wonderful to hear people saying something even when you knew it was crazy. And later—very late at night—I could almost make it say what I wanted. That was the best thing about the no-language program—that I could almost make it speak to me.

The worst thing I had to put up with besides the silence and the rain was the moths that came in all the time throwing enormous shadows and beating their wings against the light above my head. When they came in I killed them as quickly as I could, batting and batting at them with a paper and then

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throwing the paper into the fire without looking at it because when you look at a moth you have killed you see that it is nothing really. That it is just a sort of feathery powder that you have killed with nothing inside that could have been living, and thinking how you have killed something that was not alive to kill is terrible.

Once a bat came in too, probably from the shed and circled around and around. I saw the shadow of it before I saw the bat and I knew it was there but I could not look up and see it take shape. I could not look up and I could not look up and finally I thought to myself that it was because I *would* not look up and so I did and saw it circling around and around, dipping and gliding the way a bat flies, up and down, and I screamed. That is an unpleasant thing too—to hear yourself scream—but it did not trouble the bat and finally it went away again as it had come, out through the back of the house.

Another time there was a little slimy toad that fastened itself onto the windowpane by queer sorts of suction cups on its feet. It was nearly transparent and with the light

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shining you could see the workings of his insides like the workings in a crystal clock, and I couldn't believe it. I just sat and looked and looked and thought it could not possibly be, until after a while I went near and saw that it *was* true and even beautiful, hanging by those pale suction cups, its heart beating fast against the pane, and it seemed more dreadful still.

Day and night I was listening. Holding my breath and straining my ears. I got so I could hear almost anything even when there was nothing to hear, and when I breathed it was like a hurricane.

Often, lying on my bed late at night listening and watching the fire and trying to calm my fear, I would begin to feel sorry for myself thinking how they would come and find me after the rains, passed away with a bowl of broth and a crust of bread at my feet and it would make me very unhappy. Any other time I could have amused myself for hours that way—thinking how forlorn I was and coughing and aching. It would have been almost worth while. But the way

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things were I didn't quite dare to let myself get too drawn in. It seemed too possible. Too likely. And so before it went very far I would start to concentrate on the flames or the no-language program instead and that way, listening and concentrating, I heard some of the best things. The tenderest and the most poetic, you might say.

One thing I never let myself think even when I was the sorriest, was how it would be if the fire went out and the battery in the radio went dead. Never. Not even the day it did...

Then one morning the sun came out. For twenty minutes or so, and an orange cat slipped through the hedge from the farm across the way. Indolent, *caressante*, professing interest in my connection with the sausage I was eating on the doorstep. A simple orange cat without pretensions, but oh a handsome beast she seemed to me!

ROOTS AND BRIARS

I fed her, rubbed her down the back. Spoke to her the first words I had spoken since I came, remarking the while how well a cat becomes a doorstep. So proper and domestic. Paws tucked up. So tame and civilized against my jungle of a yard. And, thinking this, I fell almost at once to dreaming.

Of a lawn... smooth and green and briarless stretching from house to hedge... a path from door to gate... a flowerbed... perhaps a little arbor for the vines... order and tidiness... The same dream people have been having on doorsteps since the beginning of time, I guess, though new to me, and a few minutes later I began the battle that went on nearly every day thereafter, through rain and shine and drizzle. Pulling and tugging and stamping, blisters growing on my hands and heels, exploding, re-forming, turning gradually into callouses until I was impervious. Worn out and weary, and sleeping fearlessly. It was nearly a month before I knew I was having fun, but it was satisfactory from the beginning.

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Slowly the paths emerged and then the house and garden. Little by little. Inch by inch. Every day another bit, like eating your cereal down to the picture on the bottom of the bowl. And it amused me to get to know the nature of my enemy. To discover the different ways of weeds. Those that were yielding, those that were subtle, those that were difficult, elusive, wily, cunning. They kept me company those first days when I was alone and prehistoric, living mostly in a mist and I looked forward in the mornings to our battles, planning ways to outwit them.

Briars, by the way, are the most fierce thing there is in a garden. A sort of lion in the world of green. They are very strong and lively and when you try to take them out they fight you back, usually from the place you least expect them. For instance, when you are working on one end of a branch, thinking you have got it down and licked, the other end is sure to spring around and catch you. Or if you have the whole thing in control while you are cutting, it lunges up and strikes when you let go of it.

It is always on the offensive, pouncing and dodging and spinning. If you have left one place uncovered on you, like the place between your glove and sleeve, a briar can find it, and even when they're cut and dead they go on jumping and leaping and lashing out at you while you're dragging them off to be burned.

I like briars better than the things that look like elephant ears, though. Briars are infuriating and full of audacity, but once you have cut them down and dug them up and carted them away they stay away. At least as long as you are there to scratch the soil from time to time. There is nothing mulish or malignant in their natures.

Elephant ears do not fight at all. They just sit about quietly growing enormous leaves that keep other plants from having light. Huge and passive and rather magnificent, not even troubling themselves to bloom. To cut them with a knife is no more work than cutting rhubarb, crisp and clean, and if you seize them by the stems they break off quickly, a little sound of kissing at their feet. By the way they come

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off in your hand, you would think them barely fastened on to anything.

Actually though they have the longest, toughest, meanest roots in all the world, plunging straight down to the heart of the earth and sticking there. An ugly, stringy, singleminded root, devoid of filaments or sprouts as if its only interest in the ground were just to suck a living from it. And as long as any trace of any elephant plant is left, another one will grow. Almost immediately.

To look at the new plants, so meek and small, you might almost feel sorry for them, starting life anew, but you would be wasting your sympathy. Nothing that I know can really stop them growing. Nothing makes them sick. I tried everything on the ones that grew beside the doorstep and finally bricked them over and made a whole new platform on their heads and still they came back, shoving their little green leaves between the bricks, nourished by their greedy, stringy, deathless sprouts. I really hate elephant ears and what admiration I feel for their determination is tempered by disgust, seeing the way they keep on growing there where no one wants them to be.

A friend of mine says the worst thing to kill is a porcupine because it is like elephant ears and briars at the same moment. He once had occasion to kill one and it took for hours getting bloodier the whole while. Every time he thought he had it done for it bounded back, enraged and ready to go. He would have given up much earlier if he had known how things would be. He says a porcupine is practically invincible.

I think dandelions really have the most deathless kind of natures, though. They hang on tightly to the ground and have little rudimentary briars on their leaves in imitation of their betters; but that is just to tease you. Their true defence is simple propagation. You can dig them up or stamp them down quite easily, or take them off before they come to flower, but a thousand others keep on coming back, floating in from places that you can't imagine. The wind is their friend and cows replant them with a breath. As long as there is air a dandelion will grow, modest and cheerful, repeating the sun

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the way they do in any place they find an inch to live on.

They made a lovely covering for ground, especially side by side with daisies. Like quilts of printed calico, bumping gently in between the posts. I would love to have them in my garden if I didn't know them to be weeds.

The important thing about a garden, though, is *order*. Not what looks the best.

Of course it took me quite a time to find that out and it used to make me sad seeing how things were uglier and uglier the tidier they were. How the violets gave way before the path. How the morning glories shrivelled as they relaxed their hold upon the fence. How the strawberry plants were driven to cover and the daisies diminished. And at first I used to try to spare them, but seeing how things were I grew more calloused and behaved to match my hands. I treated all these things as casualties of battle, and went about gardening as people have always done, righteous and ruthless, putting things into their place, and when anything was in my way I dug it up or hacked it down without a second's hesitation.

Not even trees were safe, although at first I hated cutting them, and I only cut two in the yard—a chestnut tree and a flowering one that sprang between two others in a way I didn't care for.

It gave me a real sense of destruction to see them lying on the ground, so long and springy still, filled with leaves that haven't guessed the end, their centers of communication being like ours in the country, slow though eventual.

To look at the sky in the place where a tree is gone makes you feel uncovered and disclosed, and cutting up a large tree is rather like a hatchet murder, but when I needed wood and began to take it from the forest I didn't mind. I hardly even noticed how the stumps thrust up so sharply from the ground or how the sap ran out of them. It seemed quite right that I should have a fire and they should soon become the homes of beetles.

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THE FOREST AND THE PIT

I liked the forest though. The three ponds in it. The moss. The hollow logs. The water so secret and everything unfamiliar. Mysterious. Unattainable, I guess you'd say. The rain mist static in it, coming as much from earth as from above.

Liked it, and was rather frightened too. Of the silence. The insidiousness. The way the place seemed not so much forbidden as forbidding (the sign saying "*Chasse Gardée*" fallen long ago to the ground). Not so much forbearing as bearing itself apart, holding about its ponds and forgetting me. Like a forest seen through a train window: fleeting and gone, leaving an impression but no details to cling to. Showing barely a trace of my print even after a long day's work. Perhaps like any forest, or perhaps not, because the cat felt it too.

She used to come along behind me when I went there, shaking her paws at the puddles less in dread of getting wet than putting off the moment. Doubtful, half a mind to turn back, yet advancing still along the road drawn by the mysterious foliage. Like me she would pause at the entrance, listening, waiting for some sign from our speechless host. Then suddenly, off she would go on her belly through the thicket—she to her frogs and I to my sawing.

We must have made a silly pair, so bold and timorous. I used to keep talking to her to bear up my courage and every few minutes she would come running back to rub my leg and reassure herself, neither of us quite wanting to be left alone. But in a while I would be too absorbed in my work to notice the snapping of twigs, the quiet alertness, and I would start thinking in the back of my mind the thing that I was often thinking in those days: About the links in the Chain of Existence, as I called it to myself—cutting wood and growing warm, and having logs to keep me warm again and making room, room in the forest for more trees to grow to be

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sawed again by someone keeping warm and cooking, and on and on until I would be so interested that I did not hear the silence.

Or even mind too much about the trees that got away. Slipped into the pond in falling and lay there, too heavy to drag out again and were lost after all that work. Oh, it was infuriating, but not so infuriating as things that went wrong between me and the outer world. In that time that was timeless I did not ever seem to have time to be bothered. I would just start in cutting again while the ducks swam past and the sun sank into the mist like a bowl lowered into the ocean. Simply keeping myself alive—the ways and means—appeared to me wonderfully new and important. I remembered Robinson Crusoe for the first time in years. Invented additions. Thought of my ancestors grubbing out a living in a new born world. Saw the creation of the earth as the water in the ponds diminished, forming islands and extending the continents. Reorganized my position with relation to the universe...

Not that I didn't know it was rather ridiculous, such thoughts as these. Hardly suitable for the edge of a small duck pond in the center of France; still you have to consider that life was more primitive for me than it was for others—the owners of those neat fields—with nothing between me and nature but a hack saw and a hammer and not much skill in using them. Knowing that if there was anything I needed I would have to invent it. If I could think of it, that is. It was forever before it came to me what a marvellous thing a wheelbarrow was and thought to put a basket on my bicycle to imitate it.

Almost everything I did took me longer than anyone who was not me could imagine because there were so many systems to be tried. Every article I came onto had to be revalued (broken pots and pans, bottomless washtubs, old tablewear) and fitted into the picture, so I forgave myself a little more than I usually would for the grandness of my imaginings, and do not feel too embarrassed repeating them now.

But the thing that occupied most of my time and thought

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after I got started was neither cutting wood nor weeding, nor inventing handy tools. Was not even very useful in fact, and thinking of it now seems quite silly.

It was *filling up the pit.*

The one left by the Germans at the back of the house. That old explosion with the leaves swimming in it and the plaster lying about. That great rude hole in the earth by the terrace. I don't know why but I resented it and longed to see it disappear.

I got so I could never pass without putting something in it. Broken bottles and clods of earth. Pieces of tile and pails of cinders. Bits of cotton wool, envelopes... nothing seemed too small or too ridiculous. And before long nearly every work I did led in a round about way to this, the most discouraging and rewarding of my businesses.

Sticks and weeds and leaves and the sweepings from the house, rocks from the path and ashes from the hearth. Every conceivable thing for which there wasn't any other use. I had it so much at heart that I would walk all the way from the kitchen to put in a bottle cork or some potato peelings. Anything and everything that raised the level a millionth of an inch seemed not too pitiful. And if it was something big like a great tangle of briars I would save them and let them mount up to the last minute thinking the while if I would stuff them in the corner or spread them out thin or lay them down amongst the bricks. And in the evening after I had hacked and pruned and trimmed it was not so much the clearing I was looking forward to viewing but my pit.

That is what I was thinking about as I went preparing for my dinner and the long lonely evening.

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MADAME JOUMARD

Of course during these first two weeks I spent alone and speechless I was not utterly unconscious of other human beings. At least once a day a car passed on the road. Usually some rickety remnant of the twenties made in the shape of a boat. Aeroplanes passed overhead (I formed a special attachment for the big, four motored one that went to Rome and I once dreamed that it landed in my field). I heard voices on the farm and saw figures in the distance.

I did not get to know Madame Joumard right away though because I was so busy all the time and because I did not see that we had a great deal to say to each other—she on her side of the road and I on mine—living not much the same lives, I supposed, except for weather. Also I felt she was a little resentful of my being there, knowing how she used to graze her cows every place on my grounds and nest the chickens in the orchard. How she took the fruit from the plum and apple trees in summer and fall. I knew she thought of this property as hers, and my presence annoyed her, so I let her alone, nodding 'good morning' and 'good evening' sometimes through the fog.

It was not until I had been to the muddy doorway of her kitchen half a dozen times to buy eggs (handled carefully in silence before putting them into the basket), and begun to borrow things (the second best rake, the wheelbarrow that turned out to be so heavy I couldn't lift it), and given back the pasture that we became neighbors. Then the thing that surprised me most was how beautiful she was. A real *belle femme*, with her white hair and her deep blue eyes. Younger than I'd thought the first time I had seen her beneath her hundreds of shawls and trappings, though still in a way beyond age.

She had a lively way to walk that pleased me to watch even before I had much idea of her at close range, rather like the dirt chaser on the Dutch Cleanser boxes in America, wooden shoes on her feet and her skirts flowing out behind, stick in

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hand shouting, "*Bollarrrr... Capitaine... viens ici!*" at the top of her lungs to the cows. But the real beauty of her, the purity of feature, had not come to me across the marsh and grass that separated us one from the other beneath the interminable rain.

It is hard for me to describe her *character* now because I came to know her too well and like any person I know she eludes me. Has too many contradictions. She has a firm way about her, though, that never changes and she does not have to talk for long to tell you what she means. Except when standing at the gate of an evening when it takes longer for anyone to express himself, meaning nothing definite but only desiring to reveal his temperature toward you and things in general. I suppose this firmness is because her husband has been so long dead and, unlike most women in the country, she is used to making decisions. It is said in the village that you must never contrary her and this is true. Still, there are ways around her like there are around anyone.

She is not over-fond of people. Likes animals better. And her feeling for plants and vegetables is deeper yet unless you count Capitaine who is a black and brown closely built type of dog that she took around everywhere with her on an old piece of string, pretending he was herding sheep, though generally he was just asleep under her stool keeping watch over her spools of thread and bits of material, snuffing a bit at the ground.

"Don't approach too closely," she would say. "He bites when he does not have his freedom."

"Then why don't you let him go?" I used to ask until I knew there wasn't any answer. The truth was she just liked to have him with her to keep her company and it pleased her to think he was vicious.

While she was knitting or sewing you could hear her running on to him in an undertone sometimes raising her voice to direct his movements among the cattle where he wasn't. Even when she had taken a grudge to him as she sometimes did and left him in the barn, she went on talking to him as if he were there. As if perhaps he were the ghost of all the dogs called

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Capitaine she had had all her life, more inside herself than visible. So you might say one side of Madame Joumard's character is a black and brown dog called Capitaine.

(She also had a fox terrier named Mimis that ran everywhere and was her pet. But that is different...)

There was never a minute of the day when Madame Joumard was not busy. Scouring out her kitchen, or making jam, or helping in the fields. Carting loads of cow dung around. The only time she had to sit down and rest was when she was minding the cows or sitting in the kitchen in the evening after everyone had gone to bed and usually during these intervals she was mending. But whatever she was doing, wherever she was doing it, she usually managed to be alone because she liked to think.

I do not have any idea what she thinks about when she thinks and perhaps she didn't either. But in this way too she is different from most women who work the way she does. She had got this thinking in her and had to go on doing it and she did not like to have it interrupted by people just because they had something to say. She did not want to be *forgotten* and she liked to exchange a word from time to time, but if she saw someone around too often she would suddenly say.

"*Eh bien, il faut que je me dépêche,*" and turn her back and get on with whatever she was doing in her head and in her hands at the top speed, as if in one more minute she might lose the thread or the grain of it.

Although she considered quite a lot of things I did peculiar and we have not always seen eye to eye she never felt it odd the way I lived alone. It seemed to her quite natural, and whenever anyone came out for a day she would commiserate with me beforehand if she knew they were coming and smile when they were gone saying.

"*Dieu merci, revient le paradis!*"

It was also said in the village that she was a terrible miser and skinflint. Even that she was an old thief. I suppose this is true or not depending on your position with regard to her. I had plenty of benefits from her almost from the beginning

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and not for grazing the cows which she considered her right. Every delicious thing in season and chicken whenever one of them broke a leg or got stepped on, which was about every week. All kinds of jams and jellies (*n'oubliez pas de me rapporter le pot*) and any vegetable that was in danger of going to seed. Almost anything that I did not ask for in fact, or seem to need.

When I asked her for one of the beds belonging to this house which I knew she had on her place though, she told me it had blown into a stream while she was wheeling it off to hide it from the Germans. As for the armchairs, she said the soldiers had taken them away on their backs during the retreat. Not that she had any use for these things. It simply was her intention to give them back piece by piece as she saw fit and hell could have frozen over before she could have been convinced to do it differently. In respects of that nature you might say she is rather like a queen.

She had a keen feeling for anything that came under her rule and she would not let any animal or farmhand be mistreated so long as it was not harmful or unmanageable. She understood their natures and treated them accordingly so that they didn't have to be sneaking or slinking and if an animal was sick it was let to lie by the fire and live or die in warmth depending how it felt even if it was not an animal that was useful. When she talked about an animal she called it by a name as if it were worth something more than just so many pounds of meat. Any animal that came into the world and passed a certain age without being found was allowed to go on living which was why there were so many cats and

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dogs. Even the hogs were accorded a certain dignity and once she told me the proper way to kill slugs without causing them too much pain. (You cut them in two with a pair of scissors).

"*J'aime beaucoup mes bêtes,*" she often said, meaning her dependents. "*J'aime mon métier.*" She felt a kindly interest you could tell, for everything in her kingdom.

But as for people or animals or even plants in the outside world, she took no interest in them. They might as well not have existed.

NORBERT

Norbert was Madame Joumard's only son.

She had a daughter called Liliane who was married and who came to the farm sometimes with her little boy, but she and Madame Joumard were not on very good terms. The postman said that when Liliane married her mother only gave her a sick pig and a dried up cow as dowry and that is why they were not so close together as they might have been, but probably there is more to the story than he told.

Norbert was not married when I came to the Hermitage and he lived in a tiny falling down house covered with ivy behind the main house which is mostly a barn except for the kitchen and a room beside it where his mother slept.

At first I used to ask Madame Joumard who lived in the little house with the vines because I thought it so delicious, but she always pretended she did not hear me or could not understand what I was saying, so after a while I stopped thinking it was the house of the Old Man and knew it was the house of Norbert. Although I had never been inside it I could easily imagine how it was. Just a bed and a mirror to shave by and perhaps a calendar and a chair, but it overlooked the forest on one hand and the vegetable garden on the other and it must have been pleasant to live in such a little house as

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this, where you saw out through vines in the morning. It seemed the most secret and cosy place in the world, hidden behind stacks of hay and half in the trees, though I do not suppose Norbert thought much about it. He was rarely inside except to sleep because Madame Joumard's kitchen was the social center of the farm. It is there that the animals and ducks collected and people gathered around the table for their meals. It is there that I usually saw Norbert because otherwise he was working on the land beyond the stream.

Norbert was beautiful. Especially in the blue cloth suit he wore during the week. He looked the way you would expect a country boy to look but the way they never do. Tall and blonde with a ruddy face and somewhat the eyes of Madame Joumard, though more laughing.

That was the main thing about Norbert. He was always laughing, especially at animals. If you told him something queer an animal did or something bad or even how an animal arrived at a catastrophe he thought it was the best thing he had ever heard. He would say, "*eh, alors*!", putting his hands on his hips, sticking his thumbs through his vest and laughing his head off, and if it was an animal that was there before him he would look at it and nod his head as if to say, "is it true you creature, did you do that? *Did* you?" Nothing interested him quite so much as the lives of creatures.

Cats were his favorites. Perhaps because there is so little use to them it makes them pets. He was always stooping down to catch one unawares and when he was at table they sat around his chair and on his knees and shoulders. Sometimes he played terrible jokes on them like rubbing bacon fat into their foreheads to make them lick themselves, washing and washing their faces to get the taste of meat. I hated this because I can't bear to tease an animal even for a minute but the cats loved Norbert. Even Sauvage who hadn't time for anyone else. She followed him around the farm like a dog and when she had her kittens Norbert could find them no matter where they were. When he saw Sauvage coming he would fling her over his shoulder and walk around

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like that, and going down the road to dinner at night he called minou! minou! minou! laughing and laughing.

He had thousands of jokes inside him, some of them very secret. I know because often he smiled in a mysterious way that was not meant to be told and if I should ask him what he was smiling about he would just smile more without answering.

Norbert did not wear wooden shoes the way his mother did but high laced boots that were blunt in the toes like army boots and his trousers were always a little too short for him. He did not address anyone formally if he could help it and when he called me "Madame" he gave a teasing sound to it either because he did not think me enough of a girl with my hair cut so short or because I hardly seemed deserving of such dignity. But he would not call me anything else for fear of naming me out and out.

Norbert and I did not talk a lot and what we did say we said by talking about the weather or catastrophe or things on the farm. Norbert could say more this way than most people, though he was too clever to reveal himself much. I don't know what he said to his girl because she didn't live on a farm but I suppose they had plenty to talk about. I only hoped they wouldn't laugh too much when she came to live there because I was in love with Norbert some at first.

He was very good to Madame Joumard though she didn't think he was because she is like all mothers. She said he didn't know what luxury he was brought up in and told how she slaved her fingers to the bone to have him running off to town without even getting in the hay or feeding the horses. In her days farmers did not go up to Paris but stayed where they belonged like peasants should.

Norbert worked from morning to night and I never knew him to be away but three days in all the time I lived there. When he found his mother in the barn telling these things to the cows as she milked he teased her the way he teased the animals.

"*Eh b'en*!" he would say, "do I hear a noise in here? I think it must be bees. Bees in the cowbarn... now there is

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something to think about! Perhaps they are tired of the beehive and have come to live with us..."

Madame Joumard loved Norbert better than anything in the world, I guess.

Nobody knew what Norbert loved best, though.

CHICKENS AND DUCKS

Naturally living in such close quarters with Madame Joumard we were bound to come to grief one day, but in spite of the warnings we had only one encounter that first summer and it did not end so badly as it might have.

It came about over chickens.

I don't like chickens. Especially roosters. They are big greedy things and they wait till hens have found something juicy then come and take it away, nudging everyone else to the side and kicking with their enormous feet that have a spike at the back. They crow in the middle of the night or

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any time they wake up and think of themselves whether it is a moment to get up or not. When you chase chickens it is always the roosters that run first with a kind of gang-way expression in their heads and necks, bumping into everything and so heavy they can't leap over the fence.

I particularly hate roosters, but I don't like chickens either. I don't like the idea for example that they are so automatic they can walk around with their heads cut off. They are hysterical, too. Never making up their minds which way to go and going every different way, clucking and screeching. And they are such good mothers too.

There was one on the farm that came clucking and scratching into my yard nearly every day, her brood behind her, and if I came out and tried to chase her away she would stand and upbraid me, feathers whirring. She had a kind of monstrously maternal look on her face, outraged and accusing, which infuriated me, though I never pushed her too far. I even let her eat sometimes under a pine tree, but I could see she felt indignant about it. She thought I was forcing her and hers

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to starvation. The truth was she was a grabby old bird and she wanted everything in sight. Not for herself—for her children. She could turn up the best thing in the world which for a chicken is always something round and hard like a vitamin tablet, but she wouldn't eat it, would just roll it around on the ground with her beak until one of the chicks caught on and swallowed it. She wanted her offspring to inherit the earth. She thought everywhere was just a rightful scratching ground for chickens and anyone who didn't agree with her wasn't worth a pebble in her mind.

For a while she rather intimidated me and I let her have her way because the babies were cute. But when they began to grow up and went running everywhere half naked and a rooster came to join them—the one that was not such a conqueror on his own farm—I started to chase them in earnest. Every time I would come out and find them clucking about, eating my grass seed and scratching where I had levelled the land, I would fly into a rage and go galloping in amongst them to frighten them out of the gate. They would make a terrible racket, clucking and cackling as if I were trying to kill them, but I would not stop until I had them on the other side of the gate, or Madame Joumard came to their rescue.

Naturally it made her furious. Not only because she had always been used to nest that particular hen in my orchard, but because at first I had not seemed to mind.

"Now," she would say, with a certain amount of right on her side, "they are accustomed to stay *chez vous. You will just have to put up with them*!" And perhaps I would have if she had not sounded so sure about it. As it was, I felt my honor was at stake.

So I went on chasing and she went on complaining for several weeks on end. Every time I would drive them off she would come and start yelling, saying I was martyrising her hen and babies. She was worse than the old biddy herself, and things got so bad toward the end that I was almost afraid to come to the farm. I stopped ever borrowing anything and the only pleasantries that were exchanged were

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between me and Norbert because that was not his business and he treated the whole thing like a game.

But, although she fretted and fumed and went on being angry for a long while, she had never threatened me. Never really tried to force my hand. Either because she couldn't think of any way, or because she didn't want to, really. When I realized this I knew that it was not too serious and that we would be friends again once the chickens were educated. And so we were. Little by little.

Not that she felt any special respect for me and my perseverance, but it was nevertheless to my credit not to give in, and afterwards, when it was all over and the chickens had got a sort of conscience in their heads she often reminded me of the incident. Not in exactly the same way as she would remind me of the night of the grass for rabbits, but more for the laughs and because in a roundabout way it pleased her perhaps to reflect thus for a moment upon the perversity of human nature. A person who didn't like chickens—now that was something to think about.

"*Et pourtant,*" she would add, a little note of wonder in her voice almost of reverence for her own reflection, "*vous aimez bien les canards.*"

Ducks are different though, no matter what anyone says, with different builds and natures.

On land they are like the first amphibious vehicle made by a crank in his laboratory without any regard for how it was going to look. Just took a boat and tacked feet onto it. They are a little pompous from being so top-heavy but not at all righteous except perhaps for a certain pair of black ones that always follow each other about, like a country dowager and her maid on an errand of mercy. They were so goodhearted though you wouldn't want to see them interrupted.

Ordinary brown ducks are the ones I like best. They have no pride at all and stand around everywhere looking out of the two sides of their heads at once, enjoying the mud oozing between their toes. When I went to the kitchen at the farm there were always three or four ducks wobbling about among

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the cats and dogs, snapping their bills together and stretching their necks up, their feet flat on the tiles, waiting to see what would happen. If a potato peeling or a carrot round drops off the table they scoop and shovel it into their mouths and bite it very rapidly with their little teeth until as often as not it drops back out again onto the floor. But they don't care. To them it is all one and the same.

They put their heads into everything, nosing and poking and then skid back down the step to stand by the door. Sometimes when Madame Joumard was there she would pick up a duck, holding him under the stomach and stroking him like a cat. Ducks don't mind what you do with them. They are humble and friendly and curious and terribly stupid. Any old thing is good enough for a duck.

What they like best is to go down the road to the pond and glide about. It is delicious to watch them floating on the black smooth water among the trees. Especially with their children. It is the same sort of fun as sailing toy boats. I like it when they put their heads far down and their feet back leaving only their tails on the surface, tugging at something in the muck at the bottom of the pond. When they come up they have usually got some long string of root and scum trailing out of their mouths and across their noses like ridiculous whiskers. They couldn't suspect how funny are. In their heads they have got little holes where ears should go. They might look more finished with ears, but I'm not certain.

Ducks are loving and silly and sweet and the most thing they want is just mud and a little water. They stand a better chance of inheriting the earth then chickens, though I hope they don't because they wouldn't know what to do with it.

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WASHING

I'd never kept house much before. At least not so you'd notice it, and I never ceased to be amazed at how much there was to do. Besides the endless repairs—replacing the fastenings on the shutters, making shelves from the boards I found in the yard, stopping up mouseholes and so forth—there seemed an endless array of things that had to be done fairly regularly. Cooking and scrubbing and such.

One of these chores was washing. After the sun came out and made me think of such a things, that is. In the beginning just keeping myself clean was hard enough and let alone scrubbing my clothes.

The first few times I did my laundry I did it in a basin, heating the water on the hearth in a saucepan. It was very tedious and not wonderfully rewarding either. Especially in the case of dungarees and woolen shirts. Clods of earth went down the drain. Oceans of water went onto the floor, and I was not such a good washer either. Clothes came out about as dirty as they went in, very smudged and streaked.

Sometimes, thinking to copy a washing machine, I would put everything in the antique bath, fill it up painfully with water from the tap of the basin and walk up and down in the suds. A kind of wine pressing technique. That was not a bad system especially as it got my feet clean for once, but emptying the water out again took me a long time and it bored me.

Madame Joumard did *her* washing in a hole full of rain water that had used to be a place for hogs long ago, kneeling into a wooden box filled with straw and scrubbing with a brush on a long white board that felt wonderfully soft after so many washings—rather like beige velvet—and hung her clothes on the fence of my vegetable garden.

I always liked to look at the things she hung up there. Some of them were so full of a multitude of close neat darns made in the way screen wire is made that the original fabric had quite disappeared leaving, for example, a sock as heavy

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as a blanket and almost standing alone, entirely constructed of patches. Norbert's suits were nice to look at, too. Faded blue and mended with other pieces of blue, not so faded, and beautifully blending together. Some, made of ancient corduroy, were like the board they were washed on. Soft and tan and faded to a color to go with the country in any weather. Furrowed fields just plowed.

Madame Joumard liked to have me admire her handiwork. She could remember the epoch when she made a lot of these reparations, like the time the hay fork tore through Norbert's shoulder without hurting him at all—just tore an enormous hole in the coat—or the day he burned his pocket by the stove, or the day the tame calf chewed off the end of his sleeve while his jacket was hanging on the fence, in love or protest no one knew precisely. Things of that sort that remind you how time goes by much better than a calendar. She said that when Norbert was married she would do nothing but make beautiful darns and mind the cows only if it was not raining.

It was nice to see her sitting on her wooden stool at the edge of the grove, her basket beside her bulging with every kind of woolen and shapeless thing, bending over her work her blue eyes hidden behind a pair of goldrimmed spectacles she bought at the fair. Probably it gave her a feeling of order making those careful stitches back and forth, but I don't think she would have enjoyed it so well if she were not in the same moment minding the cows and making an economy and taking advantage of free grass. If she were near a tree she was also looking about for mushrooms and in the bottom of her basket she carried potatoes to peel while she rested her eyes. If you broke the chain and left her only the darning it would not be so rewarding.

"Why don't you wash your clothes in the big pond down the road?" she used to ask me, seeing me hang my things on the line. "You could go there easily on your bicycle and it is much cleaner." She used to go there herself, she said, when she was younger and did not mind the walk, though now she preferred her hole.

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But to me it did not seem the proper place exactly. I was not used to seeing laundry done in the open and I guess I felt it was a thing to be done modestly. Like the old saying about airing your linens in front of the world.

One hot day I went, though, putting my things in the basket with a brush and a bar of her strong brown soap, measured carefully with her eye beforehand (soapflakes she felt to be a reckless extravagance that would have done better never to have made their appearance in the provinces. What earthly purpose could they serve, so blown up and deceptive, melting into nothing in the pan?), my laundry tied on crazily behind me.

The road to the pond was so rocky and full of pits and stones that leapt at me from in front of the wheel that I thought I would never get there, but at the end was a beautiful big pond, almost a lake, surrounded by reeds and cattails. A sort of wide marsh where the grass grew greenly and someone had put down a board and a box full of straw. Inviting as a table spread out for a picnic.

It is marvellous to kneel into straw. Especially if your legs are bare. The box makes you feel a little topheavy at first but that wears off and you can see deeply into the pond where fish are darting and reeds grow up from the bottom. Not black and clear and still like my pond but warm and brown and alive-looking. When you dip your clothes in they balloon up enormously around your hands, bubbling and boiling as if they were clowning. You really have to fight with them to get the upper hand. When they are soaked and docile and sluggish you lay them on the board in front of you and start stroking them gently up and down with the brush. The cloth sucks tightly to the board with the first caress and the brush makes a pleasant sound rubbing in the creamy ends. When you dip the clothes back in again they have become very heavy almost as if they were being pulled under by quicksand and tiny bubbles spread out in every direction carrying the dirt with them. The trick is to rinse without getting too many reeds and tiny brown hairs of scum and fern stuck to the fabric. When Madame Joumard

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washes Norbert's town shirt which is white and goes with his dark blue suit she rinses it again in the horse trough but ordinary things are clean enough from the pond and they smell delicious.

All the time you are doing these things, dipping and washing and rinsing, you have the pond rippling before you and you can hear the water birds screech.

When I was finished with my work I used to turn the box around and sit in it and dangle my legs in the water, scrubbing the underneaths of them with the brush. It felt very good and tickled just enough. Then I would stretch out in the grass for a while. It was very bright and springy there by the water's edge, from the dampness I suppose and there were never any thistles as there were in my yard. Sometimes while I was there the gamewarden would come by with his gun and get into his boat that was tied to the duckblind nearby and go off leaving ripples behind him that came slowly back to me on the shore.

"You see how much better your clothes are," Madame Joumard would say when I came back, "that is the proper way to wash them of course".

I don't know if they were really better and it was a terrible trip with my heavy basket back over the stones but it *was* more satisfactory.

We were like two Rinso Ladies in a magazine, standing beside the sagging line of clothes on my fence which never puffed out the way they do in the advertisements, but hung heavily in the sun pulled down by the weight of darns and water in the pockets, curiously pure and helpless among the cabbages and onions.

Washing is real woman's work. I do not think a man could have such pleasure kneeling into a box of straw beside a pond. It would not be the same thing for him.

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THE YOUNG GERMAN AND THE PAIL IN THE WELL

The main people I got to know at first besides Madame Joumard and Norbert, that is—were Madame Joumard's hired men of which there was an almost continuous succession beginning with the Old Man who came and went, replaced at intervals by others. Of these, the first that I remember or had anything to do with was the Young German, a D. P. from the Russian Zone.

There were a lot of them in France at this time, wandering here and there, taking jobs where they could find them. Some of them, like Klaus, were good workers and they would probably have been glad to settle down, but as there seemed no way for them to have their papers they just kept wandering, doing anything that came to hand. Klaus had wanted to be a mechanic like his father had been and he had never worked outside the city when he came.

"His family are in very high society," Madame Joumard told me. "We have seen pictures of his house. It has brick steps and a hedge around it and a path of slate." It seemed to give her pleasure, knowing this, and it was her explanation for the way he learned so quickly. The thing that pleased her most though was that she did not have to pay him well or bother with Social Security or worry about any complaints he might make in town because a person in his position was apt to be meek.

The boy was often at table when I came in the evenings and he was always smiling and pleasant, although I never talked to him until the day I lost my garbage pail down the well. For one thing he did not speak much French and there wasn't much to say if he had. "*Bonjour*" and "*bonsoir*" and about the weather. I didn't suppose he took much interest in the happenings of the farm. When you are working a month here and the next month ten miles further on you stay aloof. Things are easier that way and there isn't so much to regret.

The bucket trouble came about like this: one afternoon I

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lowered the bucket down the well with a bottle of wine inside to cool, and when I went to haul it up the rope broke.

It was a foolish thing to do because I knew the rope was rotten and would never hold the weight of all that water, but somehow I had it in mind I guess that the bucket was going to stay empty while cooling off the wine. Anyway, I figured there was nothing to be done and when I told about it it was more to amuse Norbert than anything else. I thought if I could see him roar with laughter it would be worth the price of the bucket and wine together, and it was.

"*Ah, ma pauvre Madame*!.." he kept saying, slapping his thigh and choking with mashed potatoes, "*ma pauvre Madame*", throwing back his head and squinting up his eyes. It really made his day, but Madame Joumard, thinking always of the price of the bucket just smiled and shook her head, and in a minute she was suggesting that it might be pulled back out again. With another rope and a special hook with three prongs. The only thing was that although they had the rope, the hook was exactly what they hadn't. However, if I should care to buy the hook which cost only a fraction of the price of the bucket, Norbert would try his hand. Like that, I stood a good chance of getting my bucket and we would have a hook as well in case anything else went down.

She was very pleased with this idea—almost as pleased as Norbert was with the accident—because it is on such principles as that her life is based. To save my bucket for me and in the same time to make us all profit was a delightful idea and it mattered little if she could easily afford a hook of her own or that the likelihood of anything else falling into the well was not great. It still represented a private saving and a public gain and even Norbert had to agree that there was merit in it.

The only person who did not seem interested either way was the young German. He sat there dumbly, nodding his head politely from time to time eyes on his plate and I took it that either he didn't understand or that both the humor and the beauty of the situation were lost on him.

I didn't go to town right away, however, and the next day around lunch time while I was cutting the lawn—a work I

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did at that time with my hands and a pair of ordinary scissors, somewhat the way a cow eats grass and with about the same effect—I was surprised to look up and find the young German at my gate. Surprised and a little annoyed because I was self-conscious about my gardening and I didn't like to be observed nibbling at the lawn that way. I asked him what he wanted, barely looking up.

He had a rope on his shoulder and he said he had come to see if he could get the bucket out of the well. He said he would like to try with a hook he had fashioned out of wire if I would let him. I supposed he thought to make a bit of extra money during his lunch hour and although I knew Madame Joumard would be disappointed if he succeeded I wasn't against it, so he pushed open the gate and came in and leaned down peering around the dark hole of the well and started trying.

As it turned out he didn't have much success. Never even found the spot where the bucket lay in its watery grave like a bell at the bottom of the ocean so I offered him a cigarette to console him and assumed that was the end of it as far as I was concerned.

The next day at lunch hour he was back again though.

This time it was rather exciting. He located the bucket, turned it over, got it by the handle and nearly had it to the top pulling gently little by little before the hook bent and it plunged dismally back down the hole again. He felt the rope tighten onto it once later but it came to nothing and he said he would have to make a better hook he thought. It was strange and lovely to see how enthusiasm changed his face. Before, he had looked as if he might be any age. Phlegmatic. Expressionless. I had never thought about it. But planning and plotting ways to trap his prey he looked suddenly and surprisingly young, not more than twenty I would have said.

Again we smoked together by the well this time like companionable fishermen, thinking over that splendid moment just before the pail had got away, and the day after that he went to work with redoubled effort and a new twist to the hook

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which he showed me, turning it over in his mechanic's hands, telling me less by word than gesture how he had made it. Full of pleasure, not so much at the thought of getting the pail as the thought of bringing the two together—his creation and its objective. You could see it was a work of love.

We didn't talk much that day. Mostly a kind of broken commentary on his side coming up to me in duplicate from the well, exposing the current position of the bucket and its changes. I had high hopes and great faith, but it was not a success. Nor did he have any more luck the day after. No, nor either the day after that. It was discouraging and on my side I began to be a little embarrassed, partly because by now I would have owed him more than the price of the bucket if I had been paying him by the hour and I knew I mustn't give him more than a hundred francs, but more because I didn't enjoy watching the struggle any longer. I felt that the hook and the pail might be farther apart than he imagined and although he was still wonderfully ingenious and it was obvious that the changes he made in the hook were rewarding to him, there had begun to be something else. It had stopped being schoolboy fun and a sort of fearful doggedness was sapping the thing of satisfaction. It made me so uneasy that I could hardly bear to watch him as he leaned, sometimes waist deep into the well, fishing and fishing, coming out red in the face with effort, not saying anything to me anymore and avoiding my gaze.

He looked so terribly young and helpless and, as if that weren't enough, Madame Joumard began plaguing me.

"When are you going to buy the hook? She would say. When are you going to town? It would take Norbert just half a second."

I knew that I was thwarting her little scheme by letting this fishing go on and also in some way she resented the extra work of the young German though he never overstayed his time. There was something I felt she hated in his ambition. Still I could not go to town.

Every day the struggle grew more painful and I badly needed supplies but I couldn't bring myself to take matters

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into my own hands as long as there was the slightest possibility that he might be successful.

Sometimes while the boy was working, his hair falling into his face and the sweat standing out, tirelessly guiding the rope around the well, Norbert would come and lean on the gate smiling a little and offering suggestions. He never tried to take hold of the rope though or say I should buy the hook and this is one of the reasons I loved Norbert. Because he understood things like that and let them go on. He could behave as well at a bird's funeral as he could at a real wake I think and it is not just because of laziness either. He is just marvellously kind, but I am not like that myself and at the end of the week I was really afraid. Seeing that fishing going on and on. Wanting to have it done with and not willing to make an end to it. I dreaded the failure which I had secretly already admitted and after a while when I would see that stubborn face, no longer looking twenty but ageless, I would find work to do at the back of the house and stay there until he was gone.

Then, quite suddenly before anything had time to happen, it was over.

He came and told me he would not be back because they were working in far off fields, taking their lunch with them. He did not have the rope on his arm and he was very jaunty, smoking a cigarette of his own manufacture as if to say he had no further use for anything that was mine. His whole attitude had changed. The companionable feeling there had been at the beginning and the later one of conspiracy were gone and there was, I don't know what, between us... and the gate.

"Well, that's too bad," I said, "I'm sure you would have gotten the pail if you could have tried long enough."

He shrugged his shoulders in a way I think he must have learned working in France and said.

"It would have been hard. It was upside down" and he showed me again with his hands how it had been, only this time coldly. "It would have been hard. I can't say if I would have gotten it or not. I don't know..."

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I tried to tell by his eyes what he really thought but I couldn't. I was very glad he wasn't going to try any more though, traitor that I am, and I didn't see much of him after that until the afternoon Madame Joumard came and asked me if I could change a thousand francs. She said she wanted to make the German a present of five hundred before he left the farm. I looked everywhere for change but I didn't have any, not even a ten franc note, and so she went away saying,

"*Mais tant pis*, I'll give him the whole thing."

I hope she meant it and probably she did because I saw the three of them shaking hands warmly before he climbed into the meat man's truck and disappeared with his cardboard suitcase and box of sandwiches, very neat, to wherever he was going.

I would have liked to make him a present, too, thinking of the bucket but the idea seemed too much like a consolation so I just said good luck and let it go at that.

"He was a good boy," Madame Joumard told me afterwards. "He worked well," and the only bad souvenir he left behind him was the tame calf that had been his friend.

It was a great nuisance, following everyone that came near it, trying to put its great head in your lap if you were sitting down and generally behaving in a way that is ridiculous for a half grown cow as it was then. When it went to pasture it would not stick with the others but turned its back on them and came up to Madame Joumard wanting to nuzzle her the whole time. If you were standing there doing nothing, suddenly you would feel its slippery searching nose come poking into your hand. And at night it bawled.

"It is the fault of the young German," Madame Joumard would say, pushing the great lummux of it away from her with her stick. "He made a pet of it and now it doesn't understand it's just a calf. It thinks itself a person. "Well, she would add, pushing it again gently but firmly, "it will have to get over it..."

It slept under an apple tree next to the broken down house where the German had used to sleep and for a long

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time after he left it would lift up its head in the night and moo its despair. It made me very sad to hear it, though I didn't really understand until going with Madame Joumard one day to look for a lantern at the far barn, I saw the place where the boy had had his bed.

A tiny room—if such it could be called—very neat and orderly even then those weeks and weeks afterward with nothing left around but a rustic motto he had been making to hang on the wall or send home, written in German, and half of a candle stuck to the table. Not very revealing of his life but by the planks that ran from bed to washstand and from the washstand to the door you could tell that it must often have been wet and there was a strong smell of mould. Even the bed which stood in cans of kerosene against the lice was as straight and narrow and uncompromising as a knife and barely softer. Not exactly the place for a person to live that ever used to have a house—especially one with a hedge.

The thing that caught my eye though and made me look back was the room opposite. A kind of alcove in the barn filled with new straw, wonderfully cosy and clean, a dent still in it where the calf had slept when it was small and the boy called it by a name that no one could remember. A kind of creche most carefully arranged with half a dozen planks laid out beneath to protect it. When I saw that—the poor little room and the nest and remembered again how the boy's face had been red and puffy with effort, trying to make the hook and bucket come together at the bottom of the well where it had somehow mysteriously got turned upside down, resisting his ingenuity with its slippery sides, inanimate and elusive, a wily enemy luring him on—it was not hard to understand how the veal had mistaken itself for a person. It must have meant a lot to come home after those long dreary days fishing and fishing and working in the unfamiliar soil to something soft and warm. Something to call by a name and speak his own language to. I hoped that he would find another calf to spoil in the place where he had gone.

Then I remembered the look he had when he put the rope away, the look of answering cold, inanimate and elusive as

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his objective, and it occurred to me that maybe he had learned his lesson.

THE TURKEY AND THE FOX

I always felt rather sorry for the turkeys. They had such an air of grandeur in a way. So skinny and erect at neck and legs and gone a little potty in between—the hens covered in

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discreet brown feathers with a sort of lavalliere hung at the throat and a look both humble and proud. It distressed me the way they stood about in the muck as though not quite knowing what to do with themselves, so high from the ground yet having so little head on them. They reminded me a lot of the Mesdames du Mariac. Very tall and puzzled, they seemed, but too timid to ask what to do next. It was just the

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shape, of course, that gave me this feeling. I don't suppose they were much different from chickens in their natures.

The gobbler was the most pathetic, forever blowing himself up and fanning himself out to be bigger than he really was and attracting scarcely any attention. Suddenly, for no reason it would seem, he would take a deep breath and begin a great whirring of feathers and a rattle in his throat that ended with his being the size of a haystack, very elegant and impressive and no one caring, least of all the turkey hens. Sometimes he would make himself simply enormous in front of a duck eating seeds on the manure pile without her even looking up. Once when I came out of the front door of my house to empty some potato peelings I found him balancing on the gate in front me and when he saw me he took a breath and made himself bigger than God, on top of his stringy legs. I suppose it made him feel good being up there and I would have curtsied except for the potato peelings. Probably he was getting enough pleasure out of his own performance to satisfy him, though.

I think there must have been a time when turkeys were much more important than they are now. Perhaps in savage days. Anyway I hope so because their present lives are not easy, at least by our standards. For one thing gobblers are very ugly even before they lose their fluff. There is never a time in a gobbler's life when you would call him cunning or lovable or want to cuddle him. They are neither endearing like ducks nor marvellously beautiful and useless the way peacocks are, regal and meatless. If they were not so good to eat no one would bother to have a turkey anywhere, and they would be hard put to it to find enough to feed on in these modern woods, taking up such a lot of space with their stretching and strutting.

I don't either love or hate turkeys; they just make me a little sad. But when Madame Joumard lost one of the hens in the woods I said I would look for it. She went in there to lay her eggs, being timid and not wanting anyone to find them I guess, and Madame Joumard was afraid she would be eaten by a fox.

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The wood where she was lost, or from her point of view hiding, was not a wood I liked, being deep and tangly, and there is a lonely wagon path that leads into the heart of it for hauling out trees that have been cut. In the centre is a large clearing where nothing is left but stumps, and the wood is piled as neatly in cords. It has the air of a secret place found out that makes me nervous. I don't like the look of a place where people have so obviously been when I was not. A hidden place where people I never saw have been busy and gone away leaving traces of themselves.

I don't like to pass along a road at night and see machinery piled over with covers and left alone either, because the machinery generally takes on the air of something that it isn't. An old man stooping over half a horse or someone dead beside a bass fiddle. Queer things, always lumpy under lamplight. But that is different, and not so bad as the look of a place where people have been lately and gone off.

Usually when I went looking for the turkey hen it was evening on my way for milk. I would take the long way around a bend then and later go for a walk. There are a lot of smells on a summer night that bring back things to me, or make me think of things I can't remember in the day. Like honeysuckle. For a long time I smelled honeysuckle and was reminded by it and never found it, believing probably it didn't grow in France and when I did I was able to account for a lot of things that had been going through my mind, putting the two together—scent and memory.

I was never alone on my walks because Mimis and Mon Gris and La Reine Orange and sometimes even Sauvage used to follow me. The cats partly because they knew there would be milk at the end and Mimis because she is a dog. Looking at us, no one would have thought we were together, each of us having different things that held us up along the way. Places we had reason to pause. The cats stopping beside the gully to see if there were frogs, and in the tufts of grass, pretending mice or just jumping for fun, and Mimis like me occupied more by smells of different kinds, our paths coming together only when our separate missions crossed. A tail

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against an ankle and sometimes a boot on a paw. But along the road by the wood we always drew near each other and when I went in to look for the turkey they stayed close by, snuffing about cautiously going down the darkening path.

Once in, the thing that was most annoying, to me at any rate, was that I could never think exactly how you should call a turkey hen. Or if it helped any when I did. You usually feel when you are going along looking for a creature that is lost you should say its name or make some sign not to take it unaware and frighten it, or anyhow to let it know. But you can't go through a wood calling a turkey hen and expecting it to come. Especially not one that has gone there to hide.

So the search went on every night for a long time, calling uncertainly and looking, but we never found a trace of her. Probably we passed her a dozen times sitting on her nest or perhaps she was just beyond the clearing where the wood was stacked and neither the animals or I really wanted to go. But more likely she was already dead because later Norbert found the place where she had been killed and the carcass was already old.

I didn't feel sorry about the hen when he told me but it

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made me shiver knowing there really *was* a fox in the wood all the while. Not that any of us were its sort of game, still it was worth thinking about...

Madame Journard had a story about the forest, that was even scarier though. And better I think. I have heard it several times, still I always like it again. About the forest in winter when the trees are bare.

She tells it in the evening when she is milking the cows in the barn in the dark, the tied dogs lying quiet and I have come across the road late under the stars, carrying my pail with me and have stood outside for a while looking about because it is the end of a fine day and then gone in saying.

"*Il faisait beau aujourd'hui,*" and she has said, "*Oui... il faisait beau aujourd'hui. Il fait beau maintenant. Mais il y a des jours quand il fait pas beau... il y a des jours quand il fait pas beau...*" and I can feel her pursing up her lips and see the outline of her head as she pushes it further into the side of the cow. "*Il y a des jours quand il fait pas beau...*"

That is in the winter. When the sun no longer shines and one no longer looks for it to because it will not shine in the winter. In the month of January. When the leaves are gone from the trees and the blood of summer is no longer in you and the bushes are dead and the garden is bare and nothing is growing. You look at the ground and it is frozen under your feet and ice stands in the puddles and you break it with your shoes and wonder how it is that anything has ever grown and if it ever will again. You know the sun will come and things will live again, but in the month of January when the blood of summer is gone and there is nothing but icy water in your veins you cannot believe it. No... you look at the ground and the branches of the trees above knocking themselves together and you cannot believe it.

The cats come picking their way across the earth lifting their feet up from it and the pigeons are huddled together and you do not believe it will be spring again. All around you it is silent except for the wind which is knocking the

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branches of the trees together, and things you pick up do not bend but break, and all the day long you feel alone. You feel cold and there is nothing in your mind and sometimes Norbert and the Old Man have gone off somewhere and it is then that you look at the forest and see it pressing in on you, the branches knocking together, and you go into the barn and there is not a sound but the cows munching their dry fodder, no longer restless the way they were in the autumn, knowing it is winter, just standing there. And sometimes you think there is a person sitting in the corner but when you look again it is gone, and when you come out you see the forest still around you. You go in the house and the stove is warm and the animals are lying beside it and you sit down. But when you go out there is the forest around you, the branches knocking together, cold and lonely in the wind. And wherever you go the forest is still around you and inside there is a bird of which one doesn't know the name. A big bird that goes flapping along through the trees, screaming: AAAAAAAAAK as if he were going through your brain.

That was Winter, and although I had never been there then I could see it, sitting in the straw of a summer evening listening to the milk swishing out. I could hear that bird going through my brain and it would make me shiver just hearing about it...

(These are the opening chapters of Miss Hill's account of her life near a small farming community in the Department of Yonne.)

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CHILDREN ARE GAME

I have come often to this forest,
home to these never not green trees.
Now, in a grove of auburn bones
the spindling skeletons summer flowers,
I hear the soft snow hiss through fir and spruce,
the shrill quick children skating on the pond
a safe and thousand miles from shoal and shark.
What wings will whistle down this resined bark
what monstrous blooming blast belief?
Children should not come to grief.
I swore that even crows could sing
I thawed my winters thinking spring
and now am always cold, with reason,
for bombs can blossom any season.
The pheasants chicks scratch posted ground,
children are game the whole year round
skating the thin ice of the pond
gay and innocent and spruce:
while I in a grave of once-were flowers
and stiffer than their thready bones
forget these seen to be green trees
too mindful of the forest.

—Isabella Gardner

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Fiction

DINO BUZZATI was born at Belluno, on Lake Como, in 1906. His best known works, including novels, short stories and plays, are *Barnabo delle montagne, Il segreto del Bosco Vecchio, Il deserto dei Tartari* (Farrar, Straus et Young, 1952; entitled in English: *The Tartar Steppes*), *I sette messaggeri* (from which "Sette piani"—"Seven Storeys"—is taken), *Paura alla Scala, Un caso clinico* (a dramatic version of "Seven Storeys" broadcast by the Italian Radio), and *Il crollo della Baliverna.* Stories by Buzzati have been published previously in the U. S. by *Partisan Review, Harper's Bazaar,* and in Simon and Schuster's recent *Modern Italian Short Stories.* Ben Johnson, the translator, is an advisory editor of this review.

EVAN S. CONNELL JR. has twice been published in the O. Henry Awards Prize Story volumes. His stories have appeared in *Flair, Tomorrow,* and *New World Writing. The Fisherman from Chihuahua* is his second appearance in THE PARIS REVIEW.

MAC HYMAN'S *No Time for Sergeants,* recently published by Random House, was half of the Book of the Month Club's dual selection for October. *The Hundredth Centennial* is Mr. Hyman's first published short story.

ROBERT BRUCE MURRAY has recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin. *Afternoons on a Long Staircase* is his first published story.

ANTHONY OSTROFF is at present teaching courses in modern poetry at the University of California. His poetry has appeared in a number of magazines, including *Poetry* and *the Atlantic Monthly.* A previous short story has appeared in *The Chicago Review.* Mr. Ostroff was born in 1923.

MARY LEE SETTLE, an American authoress married to the English poet Douglas Newton, had a considerable critical success with her first novel—*The Love-Eaters*—published this year by Heinneman. The book is to be published in America by Harper Bros. Another novel, *Kiss of Kin,* is to appear this year. *Congress Burney* is Settle's first published short story.

Interview

ALEX HAMILTON and JOHN BURROW are engaged in graduate work at Oxford University.

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Episode

MICHEL DE SAINT PIERRE is a young French author whose novel *Les aristocrats* has had a considerable success this year. The book, published by *Les Editions de la Table Ronde*, was highly praised by Henry de Montherlant and other critics and writers. The published 'episode', an extract from the novel, is Mr. de Saint Pierre's first appearance in English.

Journal

PATI HILL's first published stories appeared in former issues of THE PARIS REVIEW. She has done articles for *Mademoiselle*, *Town and Country*, and *Seventeen*. She continues to live in France.

Poetry

A. ALVAREZ is a young English poet whose work has appeared frequently on the BBC and in small English magazines. He has recently returned from a year at Princeton to his graduate studies at Oxford.

LOUIS COXE is the author of a book of poems *The Sea-Faring*, and co-author with Robert Chapman of the play *Billy Budd*. He has taught at Harvard and elsewhere.

JOHN FAIRFAX is 23, married, with a son, and lives in a stone cottage between the Cerne Giant, Cerne Abbas, and the ruins of Sherborne Castle, Dorset. His poems have appeared in *Nimbus* and other English periodicals.

ISABELLA GARDNER'S first book of poems *Birthdays from the Ocean* will be published this year by Houghton Mifflin. Her work has appeared in *Partisan Review*, *New World Writing*, and elsewhere.

CECIL HEMLEY, the editor of the Noonday Press, is the author of a collection of verse, *Porphyry's Journey*.

ADRIENNE CECILE RICH, published for the second time in this review, is the author of *A Change of World*, written for the Yale Younger Poets Series when she was twenty-one. Her poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *the Atlantic Monthly*, *and Botteghe Oscure*.

LAWRENCE SPINGARN has published two books of verse, *Rococo Summer* in 1947 and Lost River in 1951. He is at present studying for his doctorate at UCLA.

Note: The entire collection of the Picasso drawings appears in the current issue of the French magazine *Verves*.

Le Gérant et la Directrice : COLETTE DUHAMEL.

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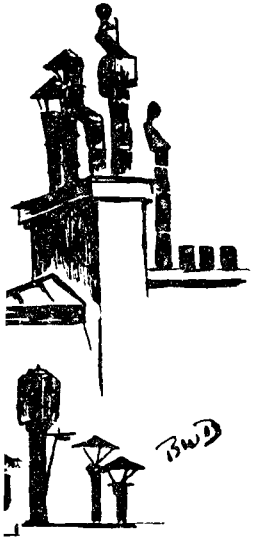

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